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SCI-TEK CONSULTANTS INC.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS
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L-R: Red Line car at Fallowfield Station in Beechview; Tracks at South Hills Junction

I INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

Purpose of the Study

Pittsburgh is widely recognized as a "livable city"[1] due to its mix of educational and cultural institutions, affordable lifestyle, employment opportunities, and public transit system. All of the pieces are in place for Pittsburgh to reach its own goals of becoming a greener, more sustainable and economically diverse city. To further Pittsburgh's ongoing transformation, careful planning is required to ensure that the very assets that make it livable are strengthened.

Indeed, the purpose of the City's ongoing comprehensive planning process, *PLANPGH*, is to "enhance Pittsburgh's quality of life by determining the effective and efficient use of its natural systems, infrastructure, cultural assets, recreational amenities, and economic resources." This study, the *South Metro Area Revitalization through Transit / Transit Revitalization Investment District (SMART TRID) Corridor Planning Study,* shares the stated goals of the Comprehensive Plan, aiming to attract investment and development along the Red Line in an effort to:

1. Strengthen Pittsburgh's position as a regional hub and enhance its global significance
2. Provide equal access and opportunities to live, work, play, learn, and thrive
3. Grow and diversify Pittsburgh's economy and its tax base
4. Foster a sense of Citywide community while strengthening neighborhood identities
5. Capitalize on Pittsburgh's diverse natural and cultural resources
6. Respect and enhance the relationship between nature and the built environment[2]

The Port Authority of Allegheny County operates a complex network of buses, light rail, and other services that help to knit the City and its neighborhoods together. There are 295 transit shelters and stations in this system. This is a story about a few of those stations – those located in Beechview along Broadway Avenue and at the South Hills Junction situated in the valley between Mount Washington and Beltzhoover. The *SMART TRID Corridor Planning Study* pulls together extensive data along with resident voices to examine the issues that have prevented these stations from becoming true community assets.

1 America's Most Livable Cities, *Forbes Magazine*, 29 April 2010: http://www.forbes.com/2010/04/29/cities-livable-pittsburgh-lifestyle-real-estate-top-ten-jobs-crime-income.html

2 www.planpgh.com/mission.htm

Red Line car approaching Fallowfield Station in Beechview

In deciding to examine the potential of designating Transit Revitalization Investment Districts (TRIDs) in Beechview and at South Hills Junction to support transit-oriented development by employing a State mechanism that allows local tax dollars to be captured locally for community improvements near transit, the City and its partners recognized the importance of the "T" in fostering overall neighborhood revitalization. The purpose of this plan is to examine the existing conditions and future opportunities located roughly within a ½-mile of South Hills Junction and the Red Line stops in Beechview with the goals of increasing transit ridership, spurring economic development, strengthening existing neighborhood assets, improving the public realm, enhancing safety, and encouraging community building around transit.

Study Area

The *SMART TRID Corridor Planning Study* focuses on the four neighborhoods that make up the South Metro Area: Allentown, Beechview, Beltzhoover, and Mount Washington. The Study is divided into two distinct areas, both served by the Port Authority of Allegheny County transit system: Beechview, which is served by the Red Line along Broadway, and South Hills Junction, a transit hub for the Red and Blue T lines and multiple bus routes.

For the purposes of data collection, the study area for Beechview is bounded by Banksville Road, Crane Avenue, Saw Mill Run Boulevard, West Liberty Avenue, and Wenzell Avenue, with a focus on Broadway Avenue.

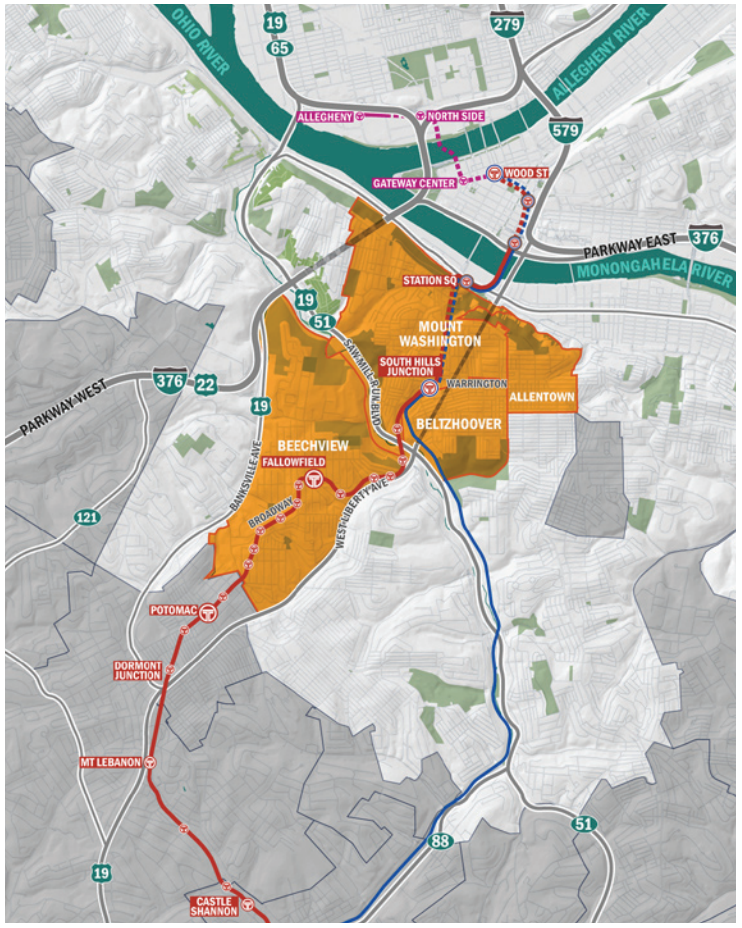


Figure 1. South Metro Area

The South Hills Junction study area encompasses Beltzhoover and portions of Mount Washington. Major park systems frame the study area on three sides – Grandview Park to the north and Mt. Washington Park to the west, both destinations within the Emerald View Park system, which overlooks Downtown Pittsburgh, and McKinley Park to the south. Beltzhoover Avenue forms the main eastern edge of the study area. Warrington Avenue and the Junction itself mark the dividing line between the Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover neighborhoods. Allentown is the neighborhood immediately to the east of both the Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover neighborhoods.

3

The South Metro Area neighborhoods enjoy proximity to Downtown Pittsburgh and represent an opportunity to build on previous TRID studies undertaken in Mount Lebanon and Dormont. Upon completion of the North Shore Connector, Pittsburgh's Light Rail Transit (LRT) system will extend beyond the Golden Triangle downtown, linking the study area neighborhoods with the North Shore. While each of the South Metro Area neighborhoods has a distinct relationship to its respective transit station(s) and significant variations in overall neighborhood conditions, they all present unique opportunities to encourage investment in underutilized land and buildings in the blocks adjacent and in close proximity to each station.

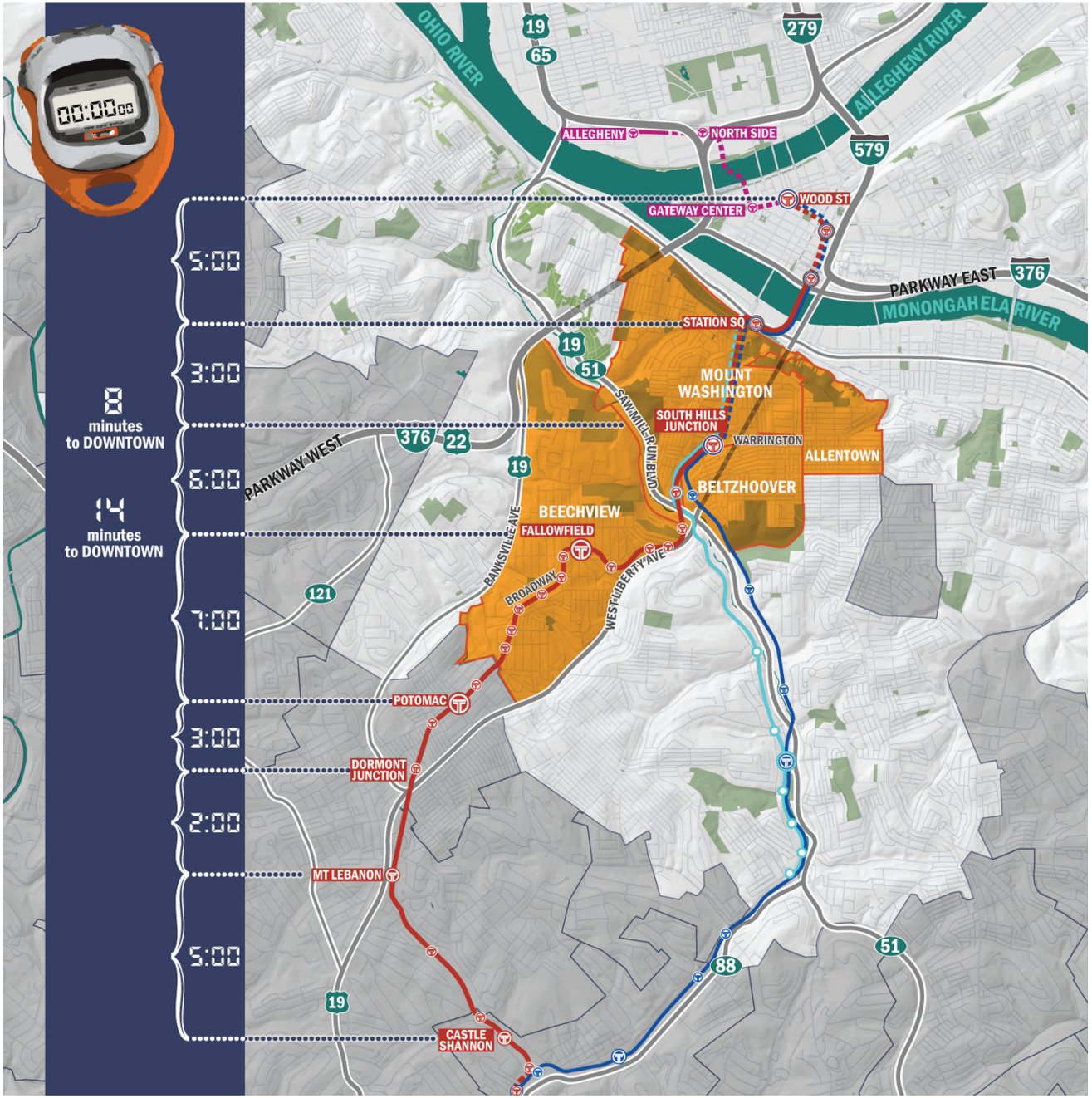


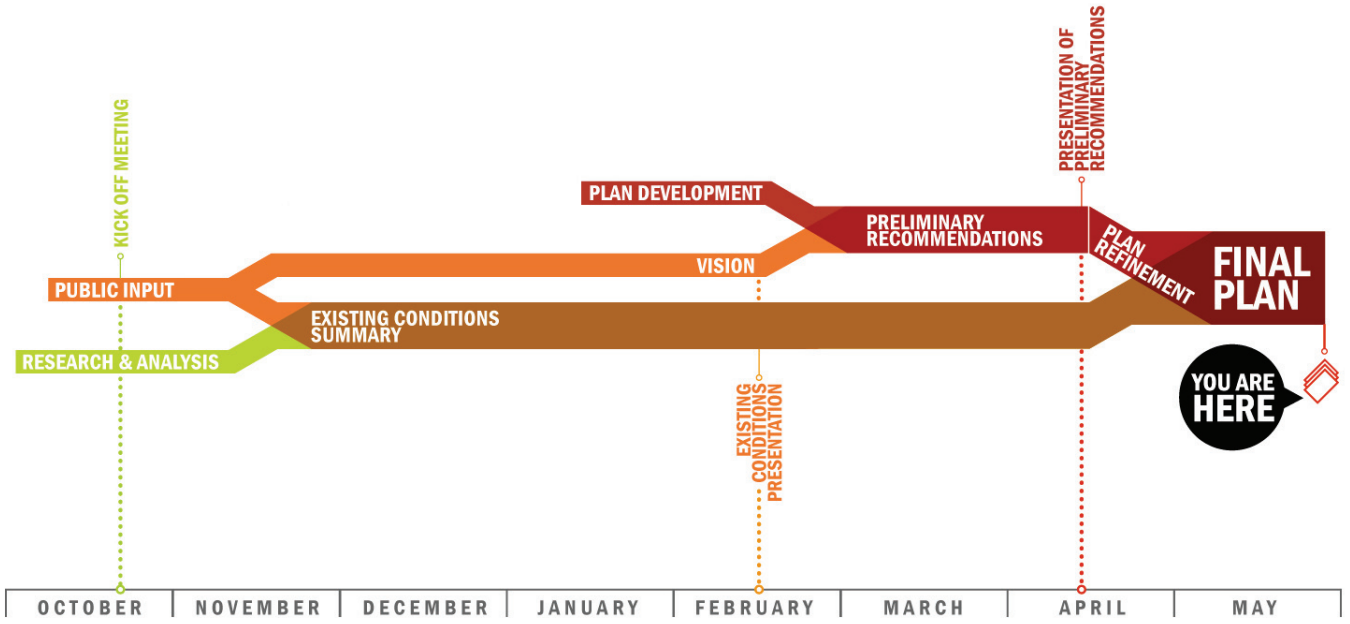
Figure 2. Proximity to Downtown Pittsburgh

PLANNING PROCESS

The *SMART TRID Corridor Planning Study* began in September 2010 and was completed in May 2011. The planning process consisted of three phases:

[1] The **Existing Conditions** phase, which encompassed observation, research, and outreach to assess neighborhoods and stations, consisted of:

- A parcel-by-parcel survey of the study areas to determine land use, vacancy, and building conditions
- An analysis of the physical environment around the station areas to assess adjacent uses, accessibility, local traffic and circulation patterns, the transit system, and pedestrian and bicycle environments
- A review of Census and related data to evaluate demographic and socioeconomic conditions in the study areas
- A residential and commercial market study for both station areas to determine market performance and potential
- A review of historical material and previous plans
- A public outreach initiative to engage local stakeholders in the planning process and elicit their input



Project schedule

[2] The **Preliminary Recommendations** phase included:

- Developing objectives to guide the plan's recommendations
- Developing preliminary recommendations that include SHORT TERM improvements that can be accomplished relatively quickly to build momentum, PUBLIC REALM AND INFRASTRUCTURE improvements that balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and cars, and DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS to test the long-term potential around the targeted stations
- Conducting a value capture analysis based upon the amount and type of potential development to determine the amount of money that could be available for reinvestment around the stations if a TRID was enacted by the State of Pennsylvania
- Public presentations of the preliminary recommendations to garner feedback and prioritize

[3] The **Final Plan** phase of work involved packaging all materials into a draft plan for review to further refine priorities and determine phasing of investment.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Over the course of the three planning phases, a series of interviews, focus group discussions, and six larger public meetings were held to introduce the Study and its goals, solicit ideas and opinions, and outline specific recommendations to achieve the stated objective of TRID and transit-oriented development. A TRID Advisory Committee comprising public, private, and nonprofit-sector stakeholders was formed to guide the process, refine the results, and build a broad constituency for the implementation of the plan.

Project kick-off meetings were held in the South Hills Junction and Beechview neighborhoods on October 26 and 27, 2010 to introduce the project and goals. At the close of the kick off meetings, residents used stickers and maps to identify their favorite and least favorite places in their respective neighborhoods to help alert the consultant team in to important local places. Local stakeholders were also asked to respond to three quick questions; their answers were recorded on tape and an audio file was later linked to the project webpage.

Mapping exercise at South Hills Junction public meeting

You Said

> I take transit because...

"It's convenient to get downtown – for special events."
"It's quicker than driving to work."
"It's cheaper than parking downtown."
"I don't want to own a car."
"It's environmentally responsible."
"It's more economical ... and worry free."
"I live within walking distance."

> I don't take transit because...

"It would be dark and dangerous when returning late."
"The trolleys [are] almost always full and pass my stop by. Since Beechview is one of the last stops before town, the trains are often filled by more suburban riders."
"It's gotten expensive. It's cheaper to drive to work."
"The cost difference between the trolley and parking was not large enough to justify giving up my schedule flexibility allowed by having my own vehicle."

> Transit would be better if...

"Some of the stops were protected and aesthetically improved and had better lighting."
"There were more shelters, more police."
"It was an experience in itself, with things to do at the station [like] farmers' markets."
"I could get a seat in the morning."
"It was more affordable."
"The schedules were followed more consistently."
"There were weekly or daily passes."
"There was an image that it was more convenient."
"It was more accessible to seniors."

To create a channel for ongoing public input throughout the process, a large-scale collaborative map was installed in the Warrington Recreation Center and the Carnegie Library in Beechview for people to share ideas and insights about their neighborhood and tag them to specific locations. The maps were up from mid-December 2010 to mid-February 2011 and were also accessible online on the project webpage via an interactive mapping application.

The website received close to 700 hits over the course of the project, serving to build awareness about the plan while also tapping into local ideas and insights. The comments collected from the collaborative mapping exercise provided valuable input that informed the analysis and development of the plan. Direct quotes from local residents and stakeholders are sprinkled throughout this report.

The team presented analysis findings to the communities on February 15 and 16, 2011, and invited community members to imagine their neighborhoods in 20 years by filling out "postcards from the future," which launched the recommendations phase of the planning process.

On April 19 and 20, 2011, preliminary recommendations were presented to the public and feedback was solicited through a prioritization exercise where participants were given a limited budget and asked to spend it on the recommendations they thought were most important.

In all, more than 140 local residents, community leaders, elected officials, representatives of government agencies and non-profit organizations, private investors, and other local stakeholders participated in the planning process.

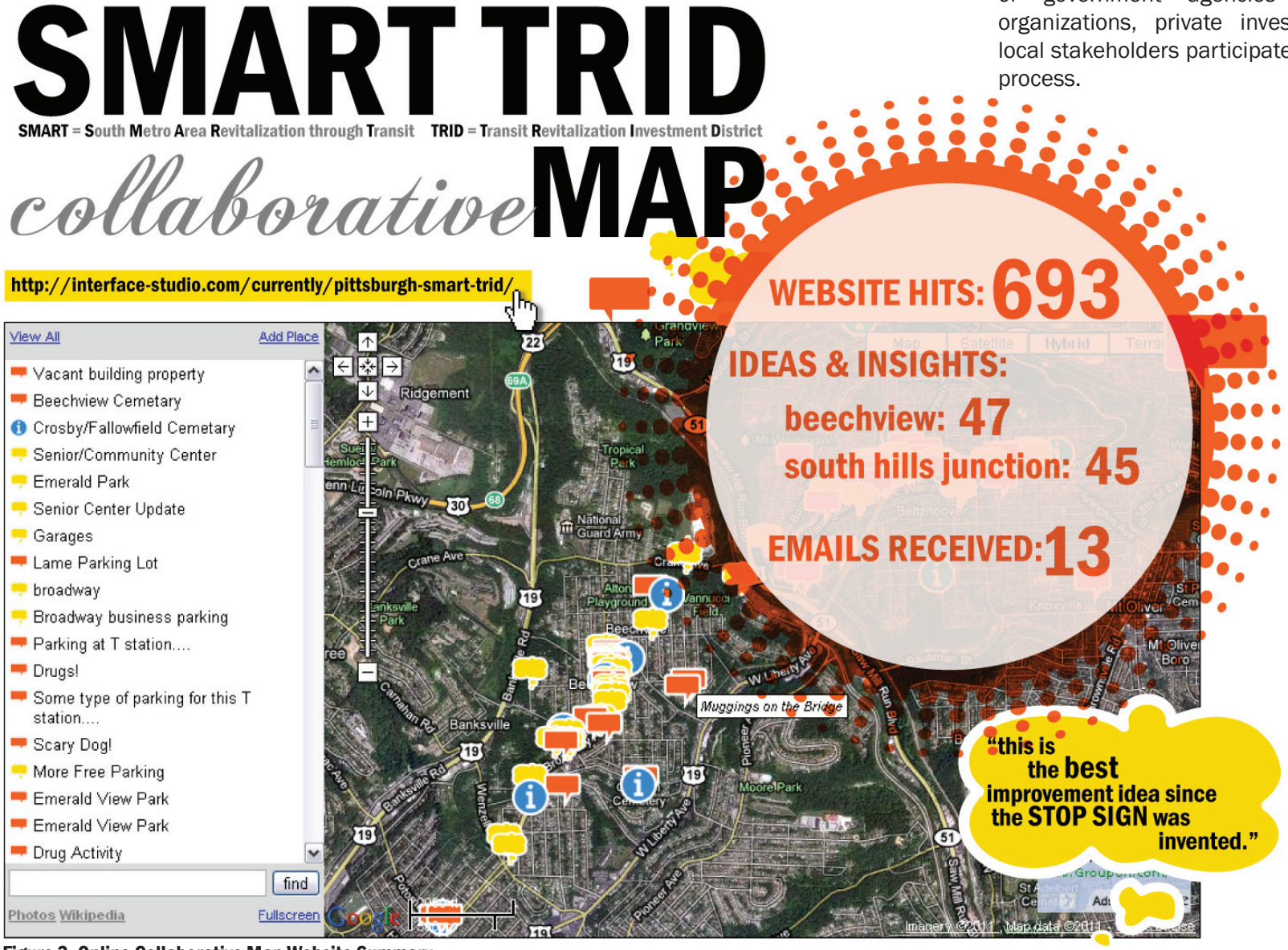


Figure 3. Online Collaborative Map Website Summary

II TOD AND TRID

WHY FOCUS ON TRANSIT

Since the expansion of the nation's highway system and subsequent growth of a car-dominated culture, transit has often been relegated to the margins of policy and funding. Trains, buses, and trolleys, to name a few, were often viewed as an urban phenomenon with limited relevance for small towns or suburbs.

However, as noted by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development, "Americans are increasingly prioritizing the advantages provided by neighborhoods near transit, including economic savings to households, reduced carbon emissions, healthier lifestyles, fewer traffic accidents, and reduced suburban sprawl. At the same time, demographic and cultural changes are resulting in a growing interest in cities and urban lifestyles, which means that there is increased demand for the kind of neighborhoods that are most likely to be served by transit. These trends are only reinforced by recent spikes in oil and gas prices."[3]

Accommodating and encouraging continued transit growth is necessary not just for the City of Pittsburgh but the region as a whole given the steady increase in both the number of hours that drivers sit in traffic and the subsequent cost of that congestion in terms of lost time. In 2002, the Texas Transportation Institute estimated that Pittsburgh drivers experience an annual delay of **12,510,000** hours in congested traffic or an average of **15** hours of delay per week per peak road driver. The estimated cost of this congestion totals **$235,000,000**.[4]

While traffic congestion is a regional economic issue, the cost of transportation hits very close to home for many families in Pittsburgh. Low and moderate-income Pittsburghers are extremely vulnerable to rising costs such as the recent increases in gasoline prices. After housing, transportation is the 2nd largest cost to families and in Pittsburgh, this can amount to between 12% and 25% of a household's income. Promoting transportation choice is important to reduce congestion as well as to affordably meet the transit needs of local families.

What happens when...

Gas prices are climbing

3 Capturing the Value of Transit, November 2008. Center for Transit-Oriented Development

4 Schrank, David and Tim Lomax. "The 2002 Urban Mobility Report," Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System, June 2002.

An alternative to sitting in traffic

The Port Authority of Allegheny County serves over 225,000 riders per weekday, and transit use in the City of around 20 percent is comparatively higher than other cities. Much of what fuels transit use in Pittsburgh is a combination of topography, traffic, and employment centers. Approximately 50 percent of people who work or shop in Downtown Pittsburgh use Port Authority's transit services. Another 12 percent of public transportation users are en route to schools and colleges. But while transit is serving a valuable local need, 54 percent of Pittsburghers continue to drive alone to work, fueling congestion along our highways and through our neighborhoods.

In both Beechview and South Hills Junction, thousands of riders pass through each day, but only hundreds get on and off at those stations and platforms. Despite the excellent infrastructure, Pittsburgh is still missing opportunities to promote transit ridership and connect communities with cost-effective, alternative transportation options.

A 2004 market study by Reconnecting America's Center for Transit Oriented Development found that a quarter of all households over the next 25 years will be looking for housing in areas within a ½-mile of transit stations. The study indicated that the majority of this demand will target cities like Pittsburgh that already have a strong transit presence. The national growth potential was estimated to be 65 percent or 821,000 households living within a ½-mile of stations by 2025.

Meeting this potential means taking a close look at our infrastructure, stations, and surrounding communities. It is not enough to build around transit stations; we must do so in a way that encourages the use of transit or what is commonly referred to as Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

WHAT IS TOD

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a national movement focused on encouraging growth and development in a way that leverages the value of local transit. It builds on the fact that those living around transit stations are five times more likely to use transit. Specifically, the goals are to promote transit use by:

- Building a mix of uses (retail, housing, office, open space) immediately adjacent to the station
- Developing housing that serves a range of incomes and family types including affordable homes for families and seniors as well as market-rate units
- Encouraging walking and biking, which further promotes transit use
- Creating distinctive designs that add value to the station and surrounding communities

As demonstrated in other cities across the country including Washington DC, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Portland, the result has been fewer cars on the road, a greater use of transit, and a number of essential community benefits and improvements. These include:

- Improved public safety through the redevelopment of vacant land that previously attracted criminal activity and related investment in amenities such as new lighting
- Economic equity by incorporating affordable housing as a part of the new development
- Greater transportation choice by making biking, walking, and transit safer and easier to use
- Improved economic development through the provision of new retail as well as new jobs for local residents
- New community-oriented civic spaces like small parks that provide additional play space for youth
- Healthier citizens by promoting less reliance on the car and more emphasis on walking

Mixed use transit-oriented HOPE VI development in Seattle
Source: www.gglo.com

Transit-oriented development in Portland
Source: www.mithun.com

Station Entrance at transit-oriented development in Los Angeles
Source: www.article.wn.com

TOD in Pittsburgh

Many of Pittsburgh's most recognizable neighborhoods were early examples of TODs, fueled by the creation and expansion of the City's trolley and rail system. Historic examples aside, a few recent projects have actively sought to bring TOD back into the local debate, including the East Liberty development and the more than $300 million in office, retail, and residential development around the Martin Luther King Jr. East Busway. A number of recent plans including the *20/20 Regional Vision*, the *Eastern Corridor Transit Study*, and *Project Region* have all sought to shine a spotlight on improved local transit and identify TOD as an important initiative to promote the City's continued livability and economic health. The City of Pittsburgh will now pull together envisioned concepts for TOD and tools such as TRID within the framework of the *MOVEPGH Multimodal Transportation Plan*. As the transportation component of the City's Comprehensive Plan, *MOVEPGH* will integrate land use by combining the best efforts and examples found locally and nationally into an executable plan for capitalizing upon the strategic value of TOD.

These prior studies and the work on the *SMART TRID Corridor Planning Study* have identified a number of barriers to making TOD a reality in neighborhoods across Pittsburgh including limited land availability (especially flat land), a depressed market for housing and retail around many stations, poor access to stations, and financing gaps that make such complicated projects difficult to accomplish. The need to upgrade infrastructure, improve the quality and character of local streets, clean existing environmental contamination, and finance multiple uses on one site often necessitates some form of public assistance. It is in this capacity that the State of Pennsylvania's Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) legislation offers a key opportunity to move TOD projects forward.

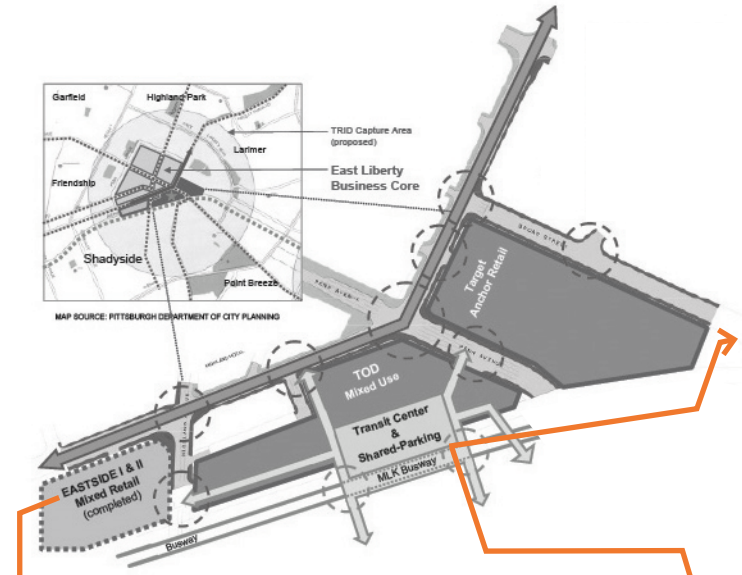
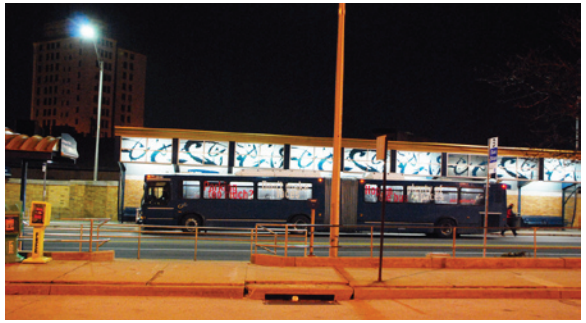


Figure 4. East Liberty Gateway Investment Area
Source: www.whirlmagazine.com

Mural along MLK Jr. East Busway
Source: Post-Gazette and East Liberty Post

The recently built EastSide Complex in East Liberty
Source: www.whirlmagazine.com



East Liberty Busway Transit Center
Source: BeyondDC on www.flickr.com

TRID Program

Fortunately, the Commonwealth has provided a mechanism to facilitate the cooperation and funding that is needed to help make TOD projects work at the local level. Thanks to active participation from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) in its creation, the *Transit Revitalization Investment District Act (TRID) of 2004* was enacted by a 90-0 vote in the House of Representatives and a 187-1 vote in the Senate. TRIDs enable municipal governments and transit authorities to more closely coordinate transportation infrastructure, land use, and private development in the following ways:

- Providing incentives for transit-oriented development
- Establishing mechanisms to capture the value added by development around transit stops
- Encouraging community involvement in the location, design, and implementation of development activities
- Receiving priority for grants and technical assistance through the State's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)

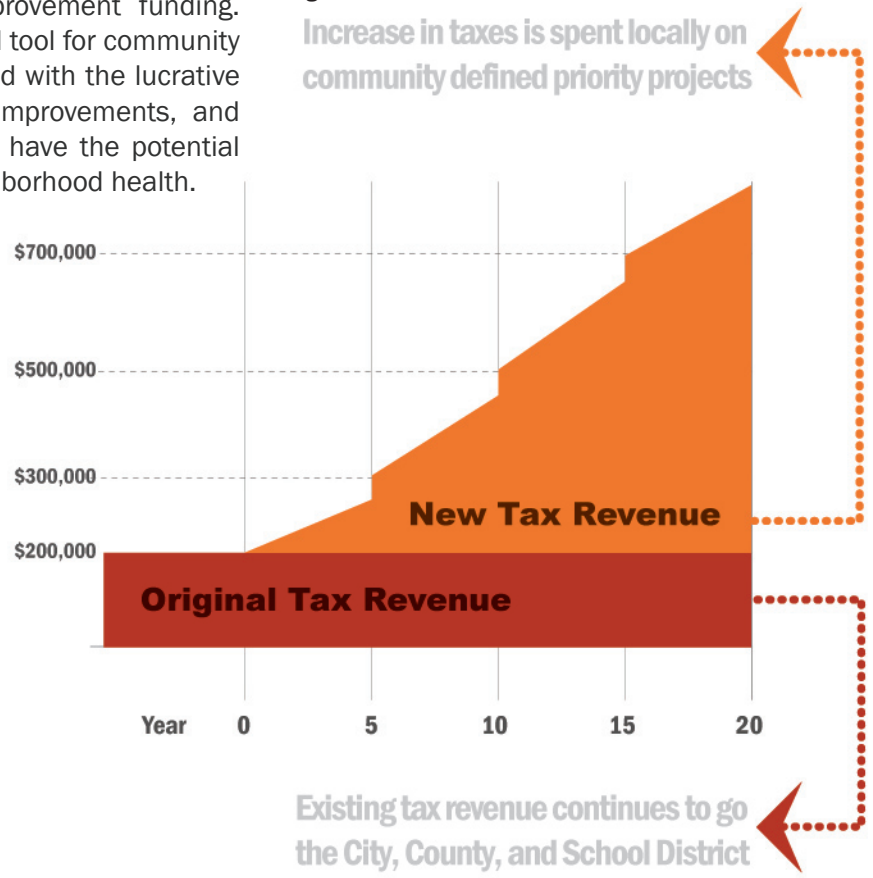
What is Value Capture?

Value capture is simply the local public attainment of *new* tax revenue gained by the increase in private land values that results from new public investments. When a TRID is formed, the *new* tax revenue is solely available for public improvement and development projects within that TRID area, thus enticing investment in that community. Further, the abatement of taxes on current property assessments potentially stimulates growth and private property improvement. Future development projects and property assessments translate into future tax revenue which can be leveraged earlier for development and improvement funding. Value Capture is a powerful tool for community revitalization, and combined with the lucrative market of TODs, station improvements, and increased ridership, TRIDs have the potential to drastically improve neighborhood health.

TRID vs. TIF

Transit Revitalization Investment Districts are nearly identical to Tax Increment Financing Districts save for one key element: the notion of transit oriented development. In fact, the only difference between the two is the boundary rules for the creation of a district. While TIF districts center upon blighted neighborhoods and vacancy, TRID districts target underutilized spaces adjacent to transit stations and nodes of public transportation.

Figure 5. How TRID Works



How TRIDs Work

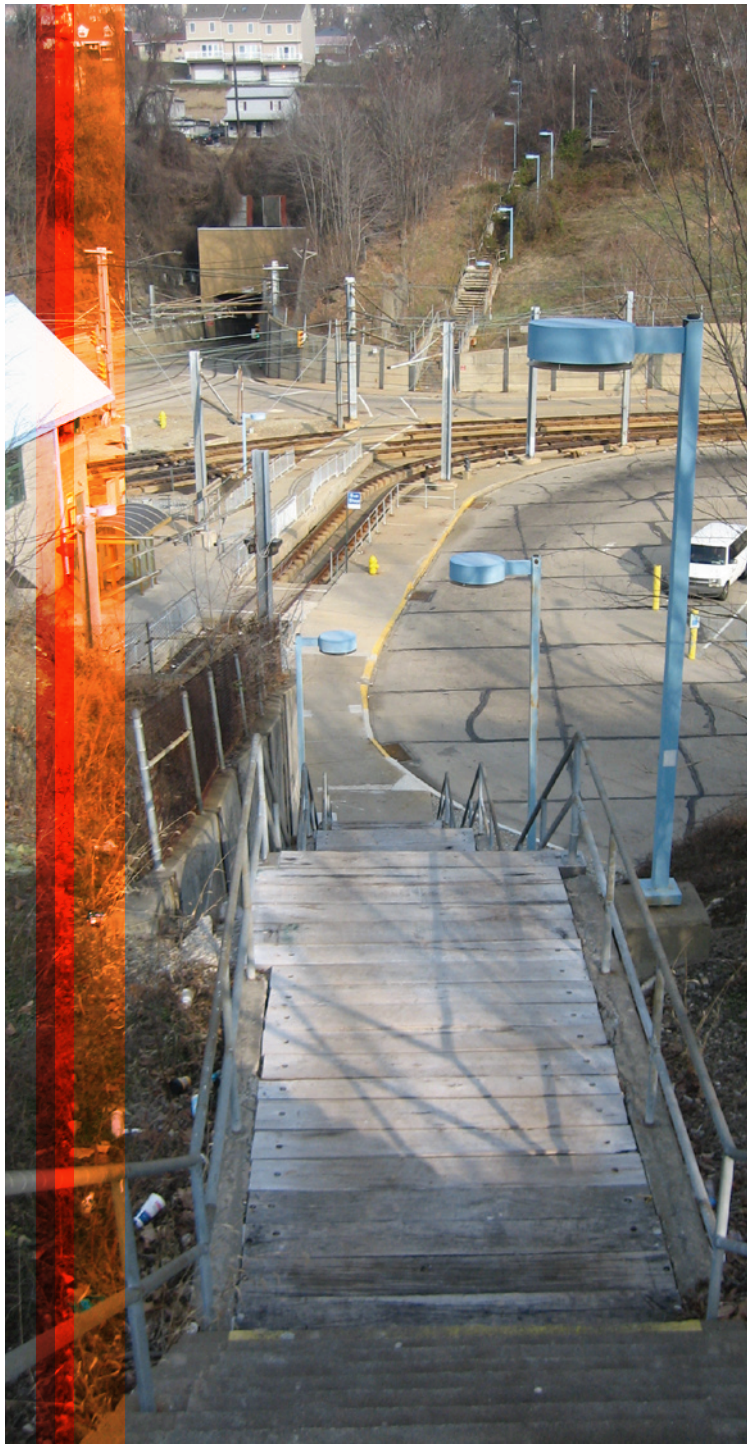
Transit Revitalization Investment Districts offer the opportunity to create designations where new tax revenue can be contained and solely used to support capital projects (TODs) within the designated area. Through building partnerships and conducting a planning study, the creation of the TRID itself is a rewarding process that integrates community education and outreach and can bring outside interest and financial resources to improve local transit and the surrounding community.

The first step in creating a TRID District is to conduct a planning study to determine the location, geometry, and feasibility of the TRID. Next, the municipality and transit agency must agree to the findings of the planning study and, if compelled, chose to move forward with the TRID, thus forming a TRID management entity to administer the TRID implementation. The roles and responsibilities of this entity are carefully devised and decided upon, and from this point onward, the managing entity will manage the implementation program set forth by the formation of the TRID.

TRID Process

Per the TRID legislation, a local government can designate a TRID in any geographic area within 1/8 to 1/2 of a mile from a transit stop. Once a location is identified, the process of planning, program management, implementation, and execution begins.

Step 1 – Municipality and Transit Agency agree to work cooperatively to create a TRID
Step 2 – Municipality undertakes TRID Planning Study to determine location, boundaries, and rationale
Step 3 – Municipality and Transit Agency conduct community public meeting(s) on Planning Study
Step 4 – Planning Study is revised and completed ❮ WE ARE HERE
Step 5 – Municipality and Transit Agency accept Planning Study's findings and recommendations
Step 6 – Municipality forms Management Entity (e.g., an Authority) to administer TRID implementation
Step 7 – Municipality and Transit Agency prepare project lists of Public Sector Infrastructure Improvements, including costs, phasing, and maintenance
Step 8 – Municipality and Transit Agency coordinate with School District and County on Value Capture shares, schedule, and TRID Financial Plan
Step 9 – Municipality and Transit Agency hold public meeting on TRID Implementation Program improvements
Step 10 – Municipality and Transit Agency execute Agreement on roles, responsibilities, financial commitments, management entity, and defined improvements
Step 11 – TRID Management Entity solicits Developer interest
Step 12 – Development proposal accepted by TRID Management Entity and municipality
Step 13 – TRID Management Entity executes Development Agreement with successful Developer, including Public Sector Improvements and Private Sector Financial or Project Commitments
Step 14 – Project construction and completion
Step 15 – TRID Management Entity administers Value Capture revenues and expenditures in accordance with approved Implementation Program
Step 16 – Amendments to Agreement or TRID Plan, as required



Staircases leading down to the Junction from Beltzhoover and Mt. Washington

III ANALYSIS

PROFILE

Study Area

"It just feels so isolated."

South Hills Junction emerged in a valley "between" neighborhoods, with Mount Washington's rear face rising to the north and Beltzhoover's more gentle terrain sloping upwards to the south. The area surrounding the station developed in the late 1800s as industrial expansion in the South Side neighborhoods spurred residential growth along the hillsides facing Downtown. Eventually, growth expanded over the ridgeline and merged with growth coming up the hillside from Saw Mill Run.

The station at South Hills Junction was established by Pittsburgh Railways, a predecessor of the Port Authority of Allegheny County, in 1904 when the Mount Washington Trolley Tunnel was completed to connect the South Hills with Downtown Pittsburgh. In 1973, the Tunnel was upgraded to accommodate Port Authority buses in addition to street cars, and in 1981, the Port Authority began to update the old trolley route with the construction of its current Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, known as the "T." Construction of the entire Stage I LRT system was completed in 1987, and South Hills Junction has since served as a major transit center inviting transfers between lines and modes of transit.[5]

However, located in a bowl between the Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover neighborhoods, South Hills Junction currently looks and feels like a forgotten back door to both communities, and though both neighborhoods use the transit resources at the Junction, neither fully claims the station or identifies it as an integrated part of the neighborhood.

"Is the Junction in Mt. Washington or Beltzhoover?"

5 http://www.pittsburghtransit.info/lrt.html and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Hills_Junction_%28PAT_station%29

Map of South Hills Junction in 1910
Source: Historic Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh

Liberty Tunnel, 1932
Source: www.brooklineconnection.com

Trolleys at South Hills Junction, 1970s
Source: www.pittsburghtransit.info

For the purposes of the *SMART TRID Corridor Planning Study*, the South Hills Junction station area is defined roughly by a half-mile radius extending outward from the Junction. Major park systems frame the study area on three sides – Grandview Park to the north and Mt. Washington Park to the west, both part of Emerald View Park, which overlooks Downtown Pittsburgh, and McKinley Park to the South. Beltzhoover Avenue forms the main eastern edge of the study area.

Drawn as such, the station area encompasses the portion of the Mt. Washington neighborhood built into the southern slope of Mt. Washington as well as all of the Beltzhoover neighborhood. Warrington Avenue and the Junction itself mark the dividing line between the two neighborhoods. Allentown is the neighborhood immediately to the east of both Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover. The area surveyed for the South Hills Junction station area extends eastward along Warrington Avenue to Arlington Avenue to capture Allentown's business district, which also serves Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover.

Figure 6. Study Area

Coordination with Previous Plans

"If people don't see change, it's hard to convince them that things are improving."

The *SMART TRID Study* recognizes that this is not the first planning study for the area. In fact, a variety of other plans and studies predate this initiative. This study, much like the 2004 *Baum-Centre Corridor Development Strategy* for the East Busway in its focus on Transit-Oriented Development, seeks to reinforce and build upon the following pre-existing plans for the station area:

Existing Emerald View Park vista

Hilltop Housing Initiative (2005) – Sponsored by the Beltzhoover Citizens Community Development Corporation with the support of the Allentown Civic Association, the Hilltop Housing Initiative outlines a plan for the development of 50 new single-family homes by Jaxon Development Corporation and Neighborhood Development Ventures. The first phase comprising eight houses was built in 2006 along Beltzhoover Avenue, and most of these homes remain on the market today, presenting a hard reality about the housing market in this portion of the study area.

Individuals who were interviewed reported that there were several problems with the houses. The neighborhood's reputation as a place that is not safe is an issue, especially in view of the pricing of the homes, which was too high for the location. Moreover, some potential buyers found the layout of the homes to be awkward, with long but thin rooms and small kitchens located at the front of the house. While people might move if the prices were attractive, that was not the case for the homes in Beltzhoover.

Mount Washington Commercial Business District Improvement Plan (2008) – Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC) commissioned a business district plan for Shiloh Street and portions of Southern, Virginia, Boggs, and Bailey Avenues with the goal of linking divided segments of the district through signage, streetscape design, and targeted new construction. Though the focus area of this plan sits atop Mt. Washington near Grandview Park, the *SMART TRID Study* discusses creating stronger visual cues and physical linkages between the Junction and the growing cluster of businesses in Mt. Washington.

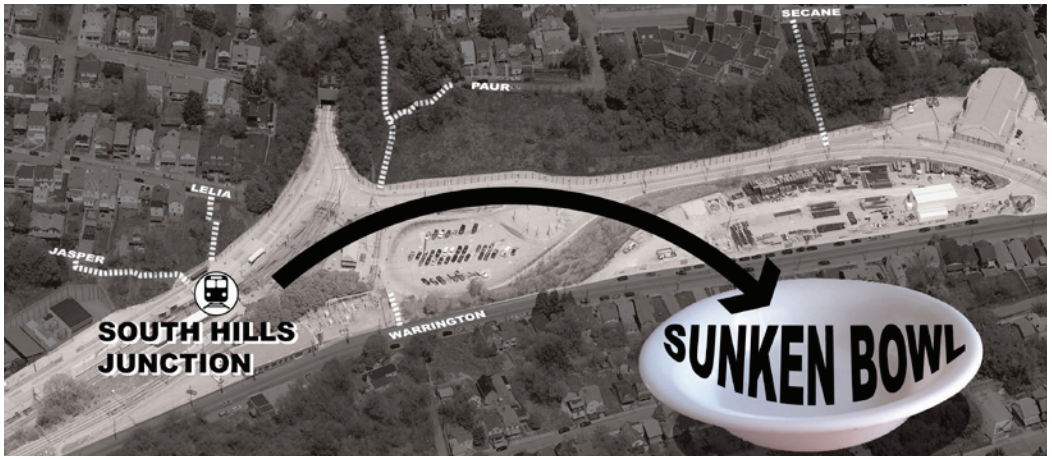
MWCDC's Ten Year Neighborhood Housing Strategy (2010) – This Housing Strategy for Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights produced distinct approaches for the different zones in the area. For the zone surrounding South Hills Junction, the plan calls for intervention with rehab and resale projects.

Emerald View Park Trail Plan (2010) – This plan, prepared for Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation, proposes linking South Hills Junction to Mt. Washington Park and the wider Emerald View Park trail network. Besides trail connections, signage and trailheads should be incorporated in TRID-related improvements to the Junction.

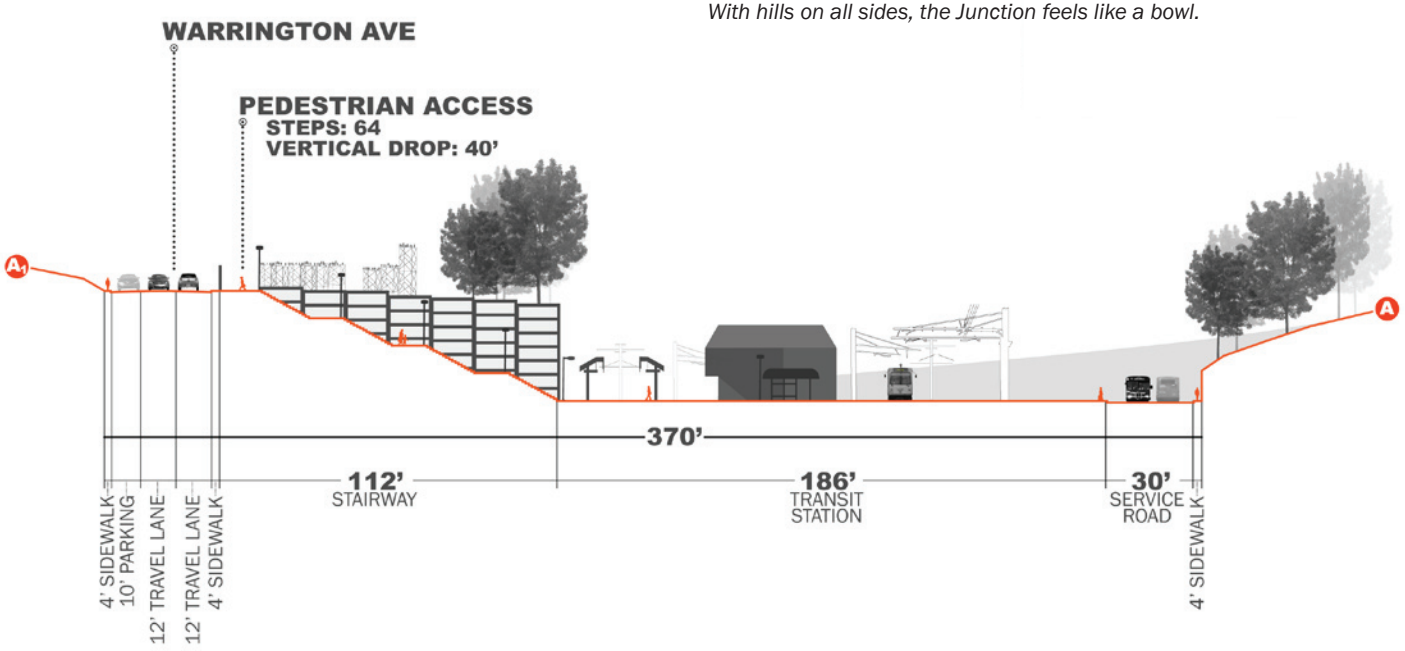
"South Hills Junction is the southern-most tip of Emerald View Park's planned 19 miles of trails... The trail plan extends the Park trail to this southern point specifically to connect to available public transportation."

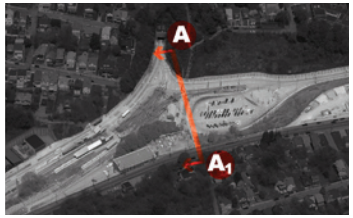
STATION CONTEXT

Surrounded by hills on all sides, the bowl-like station at South Hills Junction is both a tremendous opportunity and a challenge with respect to mobility in the area. The light rail and bus lines that converge at this location allow residents to get all around the city without an automobile. However, it is difficult to simply get to the station, either as a pedestrian or as a driver.



With hills on all sides, the Junction feels like a bowl.





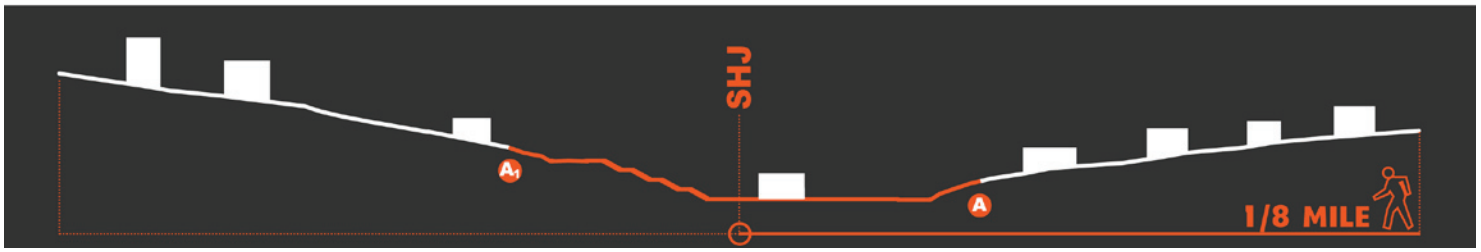


Figure 7. Section showing South Hill Junction's Sunken Location

Transit Routes and Ridership

The Port Authority of Allegheny County's Red Line and Blue Line pass through South Hills Junction heading inbound from South Hills Village, "the Library," and Overbrook before entering the Mt. Washington Tunnel toward Station Square and Downtown. The Red Line provides approximately 10 minute headways during peak hours on weekdays, and 15 to 30 minute headways at other times. The first train in the study area to Downtown arrives at South Hills Junction at 5:10 am, and the final train in the study area from Downtown arrives at 12:37 am. On Saturdays, the headways are approximately 20 minutes both ways, and on Sundays the headway is 30 minutes.

The Blue Line operates on a headway of approximately 10 to 15 minutes during peak hours, and 15 to 30 minutes at other times. The first train in the study area to Downtown arrives at South Hills Junction at 5:17 am, and the final train in the study area from Downtown arrives at South Hills Junction at 12:42 am. On Saturdays, the Blue Line operates approximately every 20 minutes, and on Sundays the headway is approximately every 30 minutes.

Figure 8. Red and Blue Line Ridership

Source: Port Authority of Allegheny County Transit Development Plan, 2008

Figure 9. Bus Service at South Hills Junction
Source: Port Authority

The Brown Line light rail service that connected South Hills Junction and Allentown with Downtown was terminated in March 2011 due to system-wide service cuts. While the tracks remain in place along Arlington and Warrington to the Junction, the Line no longer provides rush hour service to Downtown with seven daily inbound trains from South Hills Junction to Downtown and seven outbound trains.

As the focal point of transit service in the area, several bus routes service South Hills Junction as well. The South Busway routes to Baldwin Manor (Y45), Elizabeth (Y46), Curry (Y47), and Prospect Park (Y49) cycle through the Junction. Other bus routes that service the Junction include the Route 40 to Mount Washington, the 41 to Brower Hill, 39 to Brookline, 43 to Bailey, 44 to Knoxville, and 54C to the North Side, Oakland, and the South Side.

Rush hour activity is highest at the Junction. Crowding on trains is a common concern voiced by residents throughout the South Hills, as the T draws heavy ridership from the surrounding suburbs and is often quite full by the time it reaches South Hills Junction on its way inbound during peak times. Indeed, over the course of one weekday, heading inbound, roughly 650 people board at the Junction, roughly 200 alight or step off the T, and nearly 9,000 pass through on their way to Downtown, according to 2008 data collected for the Port Authority's *Transit Development Plan*.

"People feel really disconnected from the station."

South Hills Junction provides a number of challenges for riders who simply want to access the station. The location of the station and its bowl-like setting require riders to navigate a number of topographical obstacles. The southern base of Mt. Washington terminates at the Junction, as do the somewhat more gentle slopes of Beltzhoover. From the Retirement Residences at South Hills High on the Mt. Washington side, the vertical drop to the Junction is 75 feet of steep wooded hillside. From Warrington Avenue on the Beltzhoover side, the vertical drop to the station is 40 feet. The presence of steep slopes, as elsewhere in Pittsburgh, requires transit riders to navigate a staircase into the Junction at four out of six entrances.

A maze of steps and fencing lead down to the Junction.

"South Hills Junction is such a pit – could it look any worse?"

South Hills Junction has almost no street presence and very limited visibility, caused in part by the topography and its sunken location, but also due to the painted green wall that lines the north side of Warrington Avenue from Haberman to Delmont, obstructing all sightlines into the station. Beyond the visual barrier that the wall creates, it presents a major eyesore for those forced to look at it or walk by it each day.

High-speed traffic along Warrington further separates the Junction from Beltzhoover to the south. Vacancy in the blocks adjacent to the station area also isolates the Junction, as do the Port Authority-owned parcels currently used for salt and rail tie storage. These land uses fail to present active or attractive frontages to the pedestrian path into the Junction from Haberman and Warrington.

Signage is almost non-existent at each of the Junction's six open points of entry (the staircase at Paur Street has fallen into disrepair and has been blocked off). Beyond the lack of clear and effective signage, the pedestrian routes into the Junction present challenging terrain and deteriorated pathways, as described in the following examples:

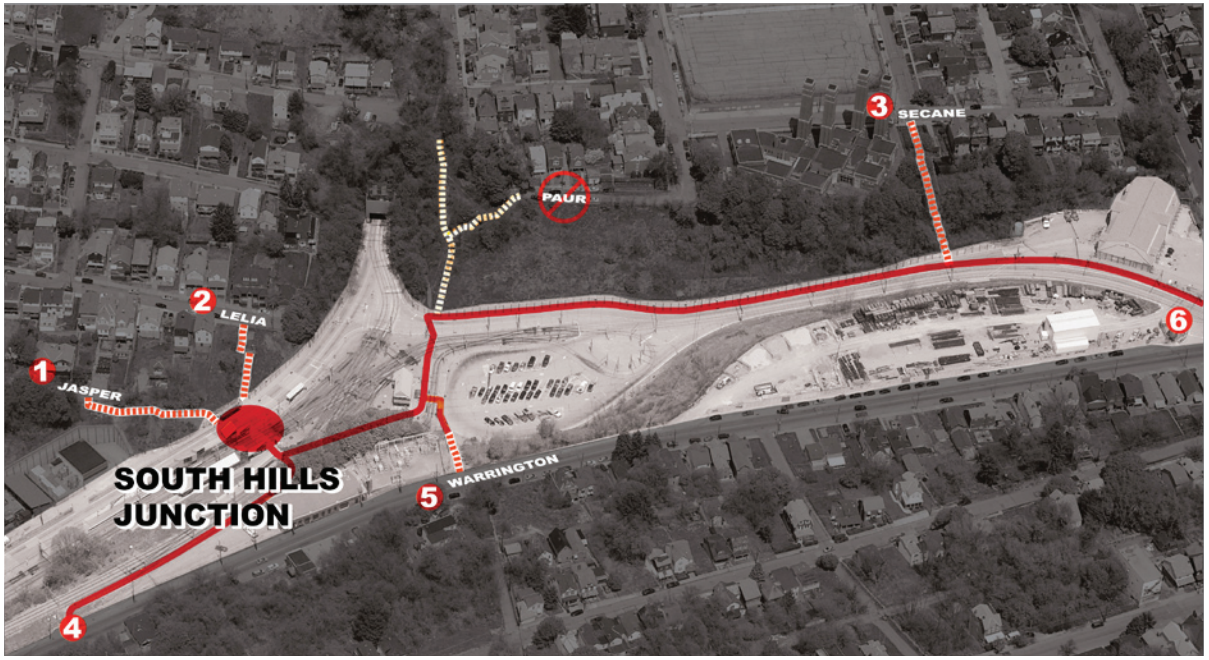


Figure 10. South Hills Junction Access Points

Figure 11. South Hills Junction Access Challenges

Figure 12. Photographs Describing Pedestrian Approach to South Hills Junction from Lelia Street (A) and Jasper Street (B)

Jasper Street Stairs: The steps to the Junction on Jasper Street are located at the far end of a dead-end street. There is no indication from Boggs that a transit hub and access point exist nearby. Upon reaching the staircase, which lies 850 feet east of Boggs Avenue, a pedestrian approaching South Hills Junction must travel an additional 340 feet to reach the T, nearly ¼-mile from the main thoroughfare on Boggs. At the top of the hidden staircase, a tiny sign notes that this narrow pathway flanked by chainlink fence and a retaining wall is the way to South Hills Junction. The stairwell deposits pedestrians at the bus stops, so T riders must cross the road and navigate the at-grade tracks to reach the T Station.

There is no indication of the station access point at the end of Jasper Street...

...until you reach the staircase at which point a tiny sign directs you down the overgrown path.

Figure 13. Photographs Describing Pedestrian Approach to South Hills Junction along Warrington Avenue (C)

Warrington Along the Green Wall: Passengers approaching South Hills Junction from Warrington Avenue are well acquainted with the ugly green wall that separates the narrow sidewalk from the Port Authority's rail tie storage site. The walk from Haberman to Montooth where the stairwell descends into the station area is 1,000 feet. For much of this length, the sidewalk is barely four feet wide, and this width is obstructed at times by utility poles and a curb cut for Port Authority vehicles. Furthermore, the curbs themselves are crumbling and deteriorated along portions of the path, offering no protection from vehicles traveling quickly along Warrington. Upon finally reaching the staircase that leads to the Junction, pedestrians have limited visual cues confirming that this is indeed the path to the station. Rather, they must pass the substation as they descend the steps and travel an additional 400 feet or so with limited directional signage across a web of tracks to reach the trolley station.

The infamous green wall along Warrington does the station a disservice as its front door.

A utility pole obstructs the already narrow sidewalk on Warrington leading to the Junction.

"People are tired of the big, ugly, green fence – there's an asset in transit that hasn't been tapped yet."

Figure 14. Photographs Describing Pedestrian Approach to South Hills Junction from Secane (D) and Haberman (F)

Warrington and Haberman: The longest route into the Junction winds its way from the intersection of Warrington and Haberman through Port Authority lands along a ¼-mile path to the T station. Pedestrians must navigate a confusing intersection where Haberman meets Warrington and the Brown Line tracks swoop in toward the Junction, past equally confusing signage that warns "DO NOT ENTER EXCEPT BUSES and TROLLEYS," saying nothing of those traveling on foot. The landscape appears industrial and utilitarian, as pedestrians pass the Port Authority salt and rail tie storage and continue walking along a narrow, four or five foot sidewalk that lies immediately adjacent to the bare concrete retaining walls at the base of Mt. Washington.

At one point, the sidewalk ends, and pedestrians must veer to the right to follow a detour, which puts them back along the long and winding sidewalk. A small bus stop crowds the sidewalk closer to the Junction, and as a last set of challenges, pedestrians must cross the street, proceed over faded signage across the rail tracks, and attempt to follow the signage within the Junction itself.

Regardless of the approach, accessing the station requires mobility, endurance, and a bit of bravery. For visitors, the sunken station and lack of signage present additional challenges and barriers to transit ridership and exploration.

"[There's an] unofficial park and ride situation at the station."

"Commuters take resident parking!"

"There is nowhere to park for the station, so drivers park on narrow sidewalks."

As for those traveling by car, the existing 47 parking spaces that exist now within the bowl of the Junction are currently dedicated for Port Authority use and not open to the public. There is currently no public parking or public vehicular access at the Junction, which presents a challenge for commuters seeking to avoid Downtown parking prices by parking nearby and taking the T the rest of the way. These commuters instead park along Warrington Avenue or other neighborhood side streets, creating a conflict with residents who find their on-street parking resources utilized by commuter cars. Residents also voiced a desire for a Kiss 'n Ride, where drivers could drop off or pick up their passengers on either end of their commutes.

The Port Authority parking lot sits underutilized near the station.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Population

The area surrounding South Hills Junction has suffered dramatic and sustained population loss, dropping 60% from roughly 28,420 to 11,213 between 1940 and 2010[6]. The population loss in both Beltzhoover and Mt. Washington kept pace with that of the City as a whole between 1940 and 1960, and while the two neighborhoods have continued to lose residents, Beltzhoover's population loss has been more severe compared to the City overall, while Mt. Washington's has remained consistent with the City's trend line. According to 2010 Census data, both Beltzhoover and Mt. Washington lost almost one-third of their population (31%) since the 2000 Census. At present, Mt. Washington comprises 78% of the immediate station area's population with 6,788 residents, and Beltzhoover's 1,925 residents comprise the remaining 22%.

According to the 2010 Census, the racial make up of Mt. Washington is 88% white, 8% black, and 4% other, which includes people who identified themselves as being of two or more races. Beltzhoover, by contrast, was 83% African American, 10% Caucasian, and 7% other.

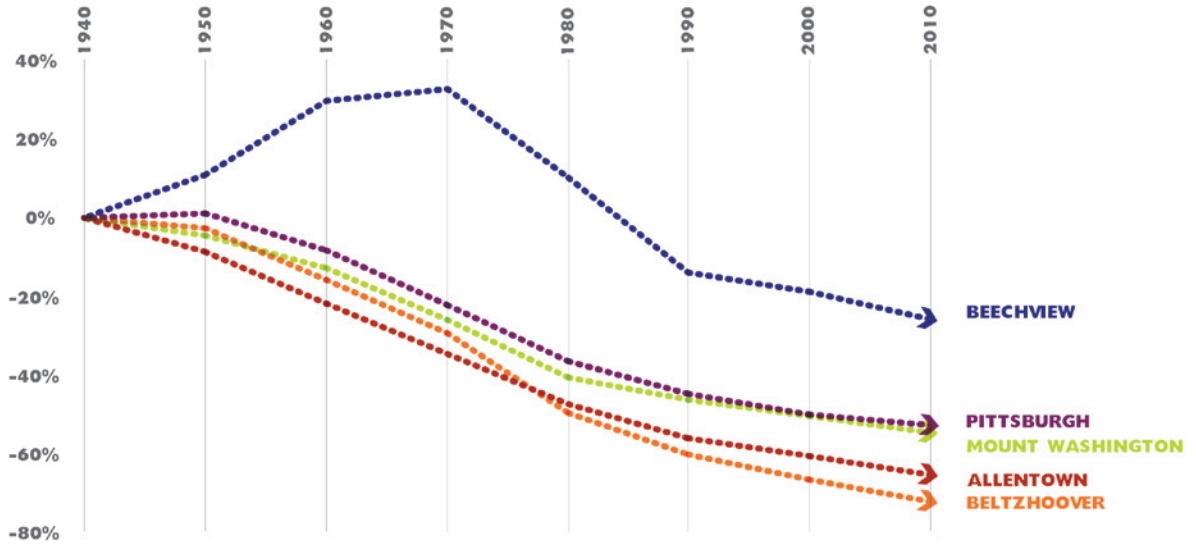


Figure 15. Population Change in SMART TRID Study Area, 1940-2010
Source: U.S. Census

6 This overall station area population includes Allentown as well.

Income and Poverty

Household income varies significantly between the two neighborhoods, with the 2010 Median Household Income in Mt. Washington estimated at $39,480 by ESRI, comparable to the citywide average of $38,437, while Beltzhoover's Median Household Income in 2010 was estimated at $30,611.

Poverty levels, particularly in Beltzhoover, are high, with nearly a quarter of all households (23.4%) earning less than $15,000 annually in 2010 according to ESRI compared to 20% citywide. In Mt. Washington, 15% of the population earns less than $15,000 per year. 2008 poverty statistics from PGHSNAP confirm the income and poverty disparity between neighborhoods, with 26% of Beltzhoover's population living in poverty compared to 15% in Mt. Washington and 20% citywide.

Commuting Patterns

According to PGHSNAP data from 2008, 36% of residents in Beltzhoover commute via public transportation, compared to 18% in Mt. Washington despite the shared transit resource at South Hills Junction. The citywide rate of residents commuting by public transportation is 20%. Sixty-four percent of residents in Mt. Washington drive alone to work versus 47% in Beltzhoover and 55% citywide. Despite challenging terrain, some residents in Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover walk or bike to work; investments in the pedestrian and bicycle environment coupled with education and advocacy can boost the number of people commuting on foot or via bicycle.

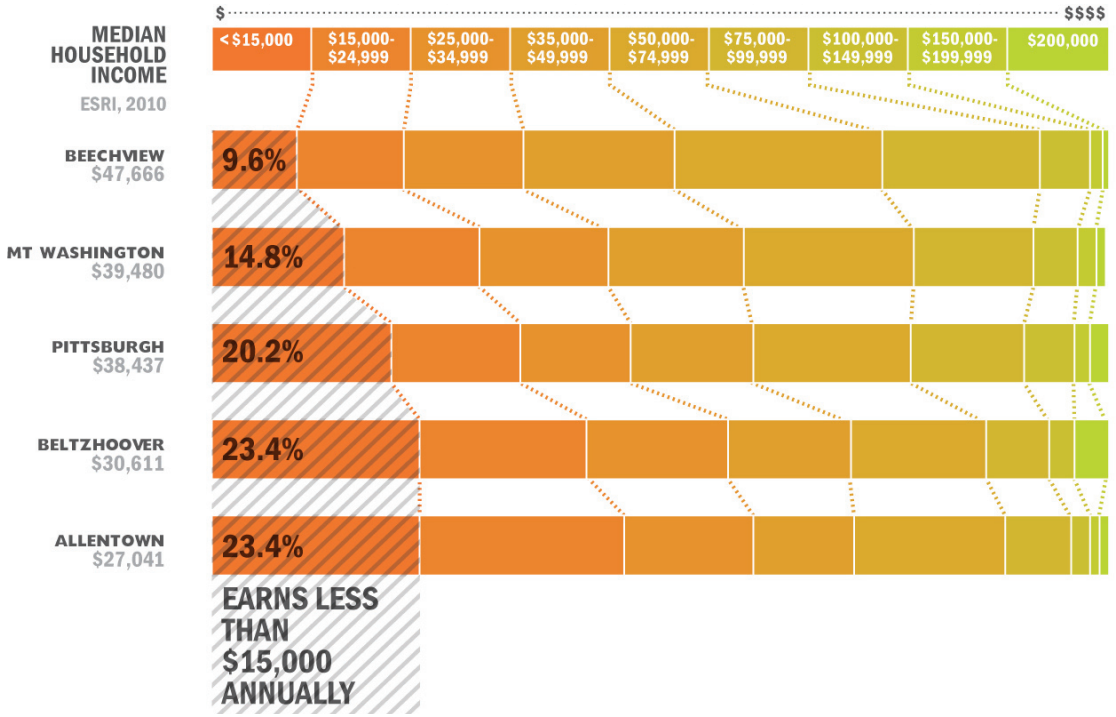


Figure 16. Comparison of Median Household Income in SMART TRID Study Area in 2010
Source: ESRI

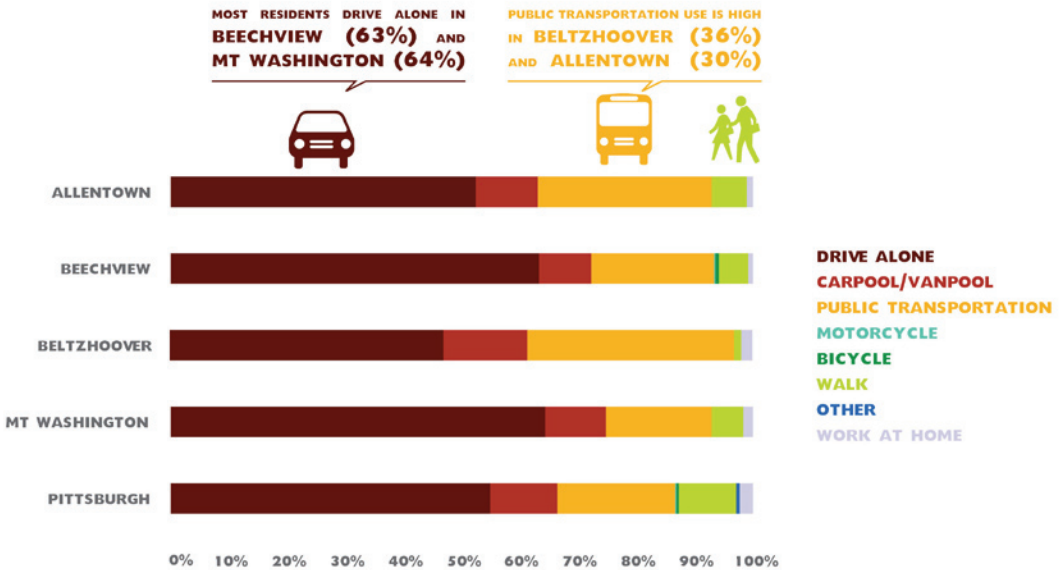


Figure 17. Comparison of Commute Mode in SMART TRID Study Area in 2008
Source: PGHSNAP

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Land Use

The consultant team conducted a parcel by parcel field survey in the fall and winter of 2010 to record the current land uses, vacancy status, and building conditions for every parcel within the area surrounding South Hills Junction. As the land use map (Figure 18) illustrates, Warrington Avenue and the Junction itself function as a striking dividing line between the Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover, with conditions varying dramatically on either side of Warrington. Indeed, the change in neighborhoods is perceptible immediately as one crosses Warrington Avenue.

Mt. Washington's southern side slopes down to South Hills Junction, hosting a fairly intact residential neighborhood, predominantly comprising single-family detached houses (56% of the overall parcel area). Open space comprises the neighborhood's second greatest land use, with Mt. Washington and Grandview Parks, both part of the Emerald View Park system, forming the western and northern boundaries, respectively. Limited commercial services cluster at Bailey and Boggs, but in general, Mt. Washington's growing commercial district along and near Shiloh Street feels more closely related to Grandview Park and the neighborhood's crest.

At the center of Mt. Washington's southern slope stands South Hills High, just north of the Liberty Tunnel's venting towers and the Junction itself. South Hills High was recently converted from a decommissioned school into a green senior residence with 106 units and some commercial space as well. The reuse of this large parcel and iconic structure is a stabilizing force for Mt. Washington, and presents an opportunity to increase local transit use at the Junction if a safe, navigable, and ADA accessible pathway can be forged linking the Retirement Residences with the station below. The other large vacant parcels in Mt. Washington (shown in black), one at the top of the hill between Prospect and Cowan and one at the base of the hill where Boggs and Southern meet, are both former Pittsburgh City School District schools, also decommissioned, but still awaiting their proposed residential conversion.

Recently converted Senior Residences at South Hills High

Beltzhoover was once an intact residential neighborhood comprising single-family detached homes, much like Mt. Washington. While low-density residential is still the most common land use, representing almost one third (31%) of all parcels, vacancy and abandonment have greatly disrupted the neighborhood fabric. The neighborhood's concentration of vacant lots and buildings, depicted in grey and black respectively in Figure 18, together account for 29% of Betlzhoover's parcel area. McKinley Park, which forms the southern border of the neighborhood, provides a wooded open space for the community, with portions carved out for active recreation.

Top: Vacant land in Beltzhoover
Bottom: Entrance to McKinley Park

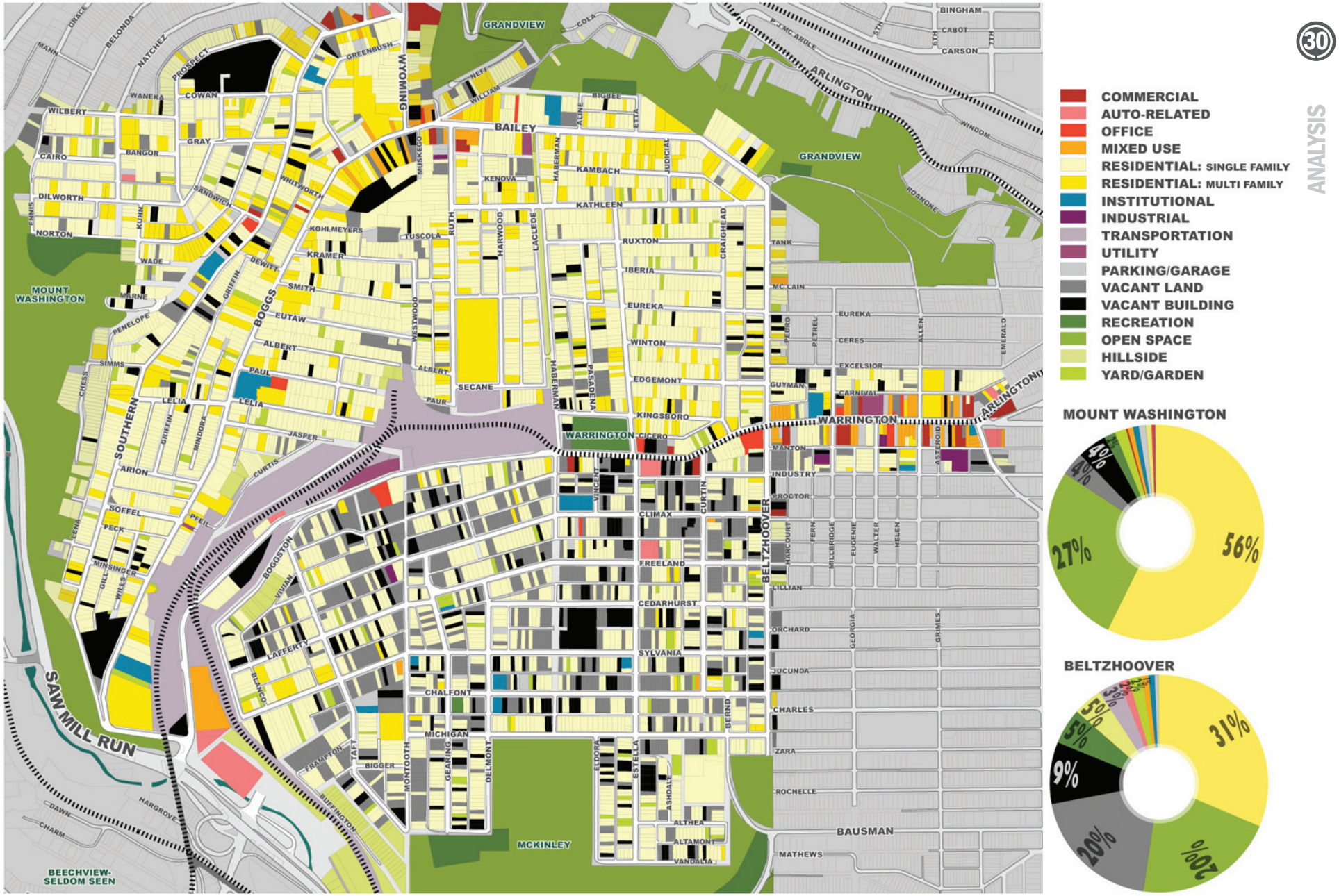


Figure 18. Land Use Map
Source: Field Survey, 2010

Warrington Avenue, at once a dividing line between neighborhoods and low point between the slopes of Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover, also serves as a meeting place for residents in neighboring communities. East of Beltzhoover Avenue, technically in Allentown, Warrington hosts the greatest concentration of commercial services in the area, and Mt. Washington CDC, the Beltzhoover Neighborhood Council, and Allentown CDC have partnered with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to host a weekly farm stand on the corridor in warmer months. Nearer to the Junction sits Warrington Recreation Center, the area's main play area (both indoors and out) and community gathering place, which is a resource shared by all three neighborhoods. Residents from Mt. Washington, Beltzhoover, and Allentown all use Warrington Avenue as a main point of entry to access the Junction.

Warrington Avenue business district in Allentown

Lastly, the station itself, along with the Port Authority-owned parcels surrounding the Junction, comprise 26 acres of land, again, at the topographic low-point in the valley between Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover. These parcels, while utilized for Port Authority and PennDOT operations, do not represent active, pedestrian-oriented land uses that offer services or visual interest to those entering the station from Warrington and Haberman on foot or via bus.

Quote from online Collaborative Map about the Junction

Figure 19. Port Authority-Owned Land at South Hills Junction

Source: City of Pittsburgh

Vacant land

Vacant buildings

Partially vacant building

Vacancy

As mentioned in the Land Use section above, vacancy is a dominant feature in Beltzhoover, comprising 29% of the neighborhood's total parcel area. The vacancy in Beltzhoover is both scattered and concentrated; some blocks are defined by large contiguous empty lots, while others are punctuated by vacant land and buildings, but abandonment and decay touch every block within the neighborhood. The community hosts 38 acres worth of vacant land and 17 acres of parcels hosting vacant buildings, for a total of 55 acres of vacant space in Beltzhoover alone.

Vacancy is a lesser problem, by comparison, in Mt. Washington, but a threat to neighborhood stability and transit use nonetheless, particularly in the area immediately north of the Warrington Recreation Center, where vacancy appears to be creeping north across Warrington Avenue into Mt. Washington. Scattered vacancy also clusters at the neighborhood's edges along Beltzhoover and Southern Avenues. In all, the areas of Mt. Washington surveyed for this study contain 11 acres of vacant land and 13 acres of parcels hosting vacant buildings, for a total of 8% of the total parcel area. Two of the large vacant building sites are the decommissioned public school buildings slated for conversion to housing, Prospect Middle School at the crest of Mt. Washington, and the Boggs Avenue School at Boggs and Southern.

Both neighborhoods have a handful of partially vacant buildings. These are most often mixed use structures where either the commercial unit on the ground floor or the residential units above are empty. Along Warrington Avenue near Saw Mill Run Boulevard, some of the larger industrial structures also appear only partially occupied.

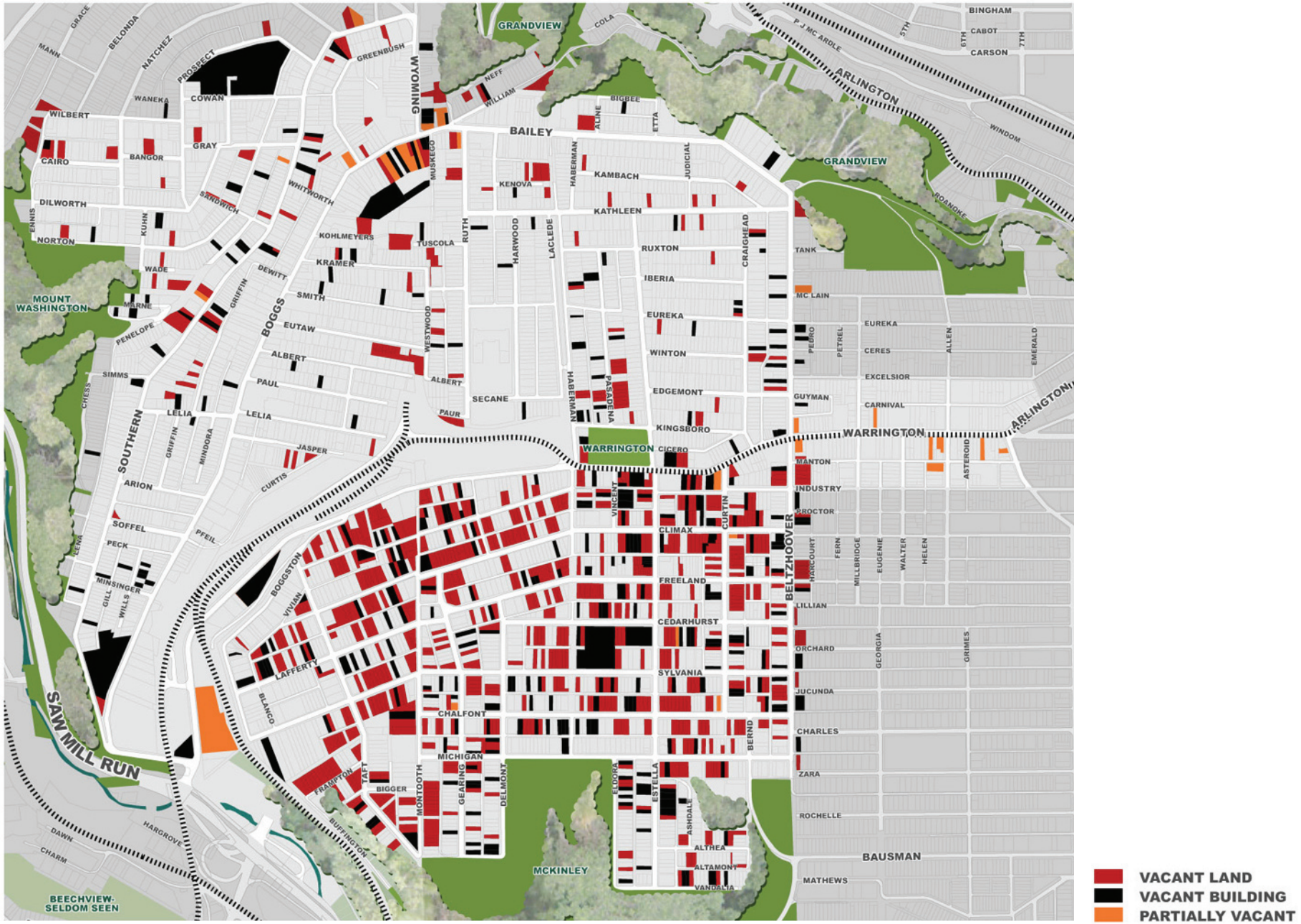


Figure 20. Vacancy Map
Source: Field Survey, 2010

Building Condition

In addition to land use and vacancy, the consultant team recorded building condition for every structure in the study area during the field survey. The exterior condition of each structure received a grade ranging from A (Excellent) to F (Failing) based on the following criteria:

- **A: Excellent Condition** – new construction or recent renovation, well maintained, good architectural bones
- **B: Good Condition** – well maintained, some wear evident, but only minor cosmetic improvements needed
- **C: Fair Condition** – more serious cosmetic improvements and minor structural repairs needed
- **D: Distressed Condition** – major improvements needed
- **F: Failing Condition** – structurally dangerous

Both Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover are home to properties ranging from excellent to distressed condition, and Beltzhoover has several properties recorded as failing. Conditions vary both block to block and within single blocks.

Building condition scale

In Mt. Washington, 50% of properties are in excellent or good condition, with 44% in fair condition and 6% distressed. The largest concentrations of excellent and good conditions are on the side streets to the east and west of Boggs Avenue, along Bailey Avenue at the top of the hill, and tucked along Craighead Street and along the side streets immediately to the west. The new Retirement Residences at South Hills High represent an excellent addition to the housing stock at the center of the neighborhood, in close proximity, though removed by a steep slope, to the Junction.

In Beltzhoover, 26% of properties are in excellent or good condition, with just 3% receiving an A for building condition. Half of all properties (51%) are in fair condition, and the remaining 23% are in distressed to failing condition. With just 3% in failing condition, the neighborhood's abundance of vacant land suggests that many of the seriously distressed and failing structures have been demolished previously. Along Delmont, near McKinley Park, there is a cluster of homes in good condition, as there is along Sylvania and Lafferty west of Taft, but most blocks have at least one distressed or failing structure still standing and further dragging down the values of neighboring properties.

Figure 21. Building Condition
Source: Field Survey, 2010

Memorial near Warrington Recreation Center

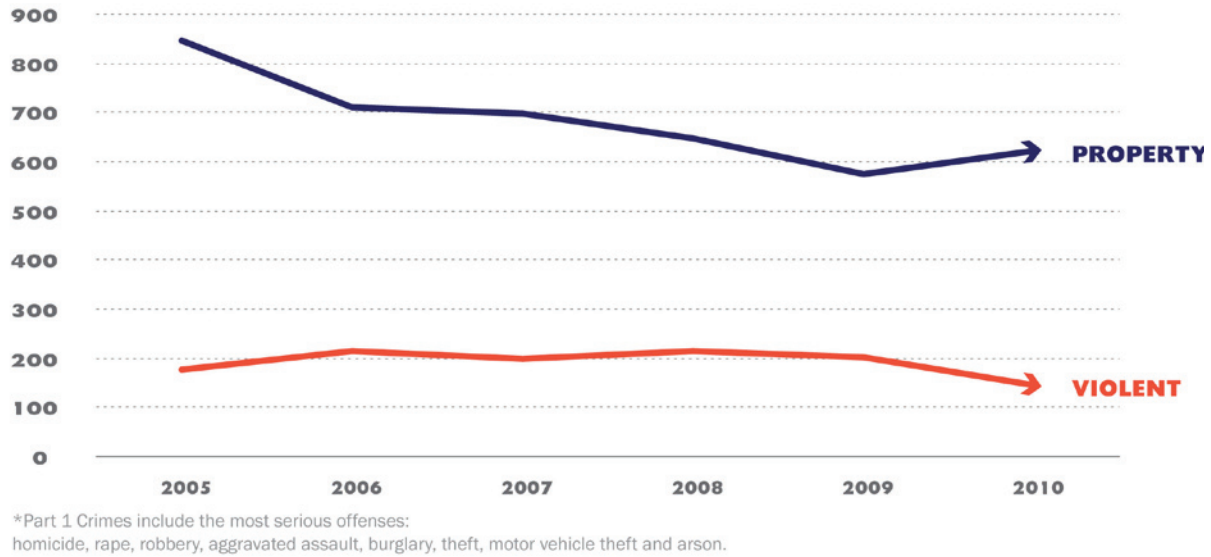


Figure 22. Crime Trends, 2005-2010
Source: City of Pittsburgh

Crime

Closely related to patterns of vacancy and disinvestment, crime and criminal activity – both real and perceived – informs quality of life and behavioral patterns in Mt. Washington, Beltzhoover, and neighboring Allentown, alike. For local residents and commuters accessing transit resources at South Hills Junction, crime is a major concern and deterrent. The crime maps highlight hot spots of criminal activity throughout 2009, categorized by crimes against persons, including assault, robbery, and rape, and crimes again property, including theft, motor vehicle theft, arson, and burglary.

Within both categories, Warrington Avenue registers strongly as a hotspot on the map. Although there are several hotspots along Warrington and within Beltzhoover on the map of crimes against persons, the one at the intersection of Warrington and Haberman near Warrington Rec Center is particularly problematic, situated at a main entrance to the Junction that draws residents from both Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover. In the map of crimes against property, much of Allentown's business district is plagued by criminal activity. To place these crime maps in perspective, a comparison of crime rates for serious crimes (including homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson) shows that Mt. Washington, with a rate of 4.4 incidents per 100 people in 2008, was below the citywide rate in Pittsburgh of 4.9 incidents per 100 people, while Beltzhoover and Allentown were above the citywide rate with 6.5 and 8.5 incidents per 100 residents, respectively.

Interestingly, though crime is perhaps the biggest concern noted by residents and stakeholders when asked about deterrents to transit ridership in the area, the station area, itself, does not appear as a focus of criminal activity. Residents do report fear about walking along the paths and staircases that lead to the station area at night, as the narrow passageways present opportunities for criminals to corner potential victims.

"High School students break into cars parked along Warrington."

Figure 23. Crime Hot Spots, 2009
Source: City of Pittsburgh

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Environmental Issues

A review of available information and a "windshield" survey were conducted by local geotechnical engineers, Sci-Tek Consultants, Inc. to assess whether sites with environmental issues exist or have existed in the past which could present a potential threat to the project goals. Sources reviewed included public and private databases, historic and current topographic and aerial mapping, and Sanborn insurance maps.

In general, the South Hills Junction study area has fewer environmental concerns than typically found within the City of Pittsburgh. With the exception of the South Hills Junction itself, there was little industrial activity within the study area. The neighborhood has historically been a residential area with some commercial areas supporting the surrounding residential areas. As a result, the study area was subject to limited environmental impacts related to the industrial development of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Adverse Geologic Conditions

Based on local knowledge of geological conditions and on site observations by Sci-Tek Consultants, subsurface conditions within the study area appear to be typical for the Pittsburgh area. Conditions may include, but are not limited to weak (with respect to shear strength) compressible soils; steep slopes; landslide prone soil and rock; existing landslides; abandoned deep mines; potentially active deep mines (unlikely); acid mine drainage; mine gas; radon gas; expansive soil and rock; and high groundwater. There is recorded mine subsidence within a few areas of the study area, and almost all of the study area is undermined except for the Port Authority parcels at the station and the southern-most wedge of Mt. Washington between Southern and Boggs (see Figure 24). Because the steep slopes surrounding the station and surrounding the southern-most wedge of Mt. Washington are prone to landslide, nearly the entire study area presents challenging geologic conditions for potential development projects.

In any case, it is unlikely that adverse geologic conditions will preclude development at any particular site within the project study area. However, if built upon, sites with less favorable geologic conditions will add measurable risk and cost to the project. The risk and cost can be reduced by conducting appropriate site-specific geotechnical investigations to discover and assess the implications of adverse geologic conditions as early as possible during the design cycle of any proposed facility.

A handful of Captive Hazardous Waste Generator sites related to the car dealerships and auto repair shops exist in the study area, one at the Junction, the others at the intersections of Warrington and Arlington and Warrington and Route 51. Each has a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) permit and handles its waste properly as required by law. This would have no impacts on the study area.

Port Authority rail tie storage near the Junction

Steep hillside sloping down to Junction from Beltzhoover

Deteriorated retaining walls along Warrington

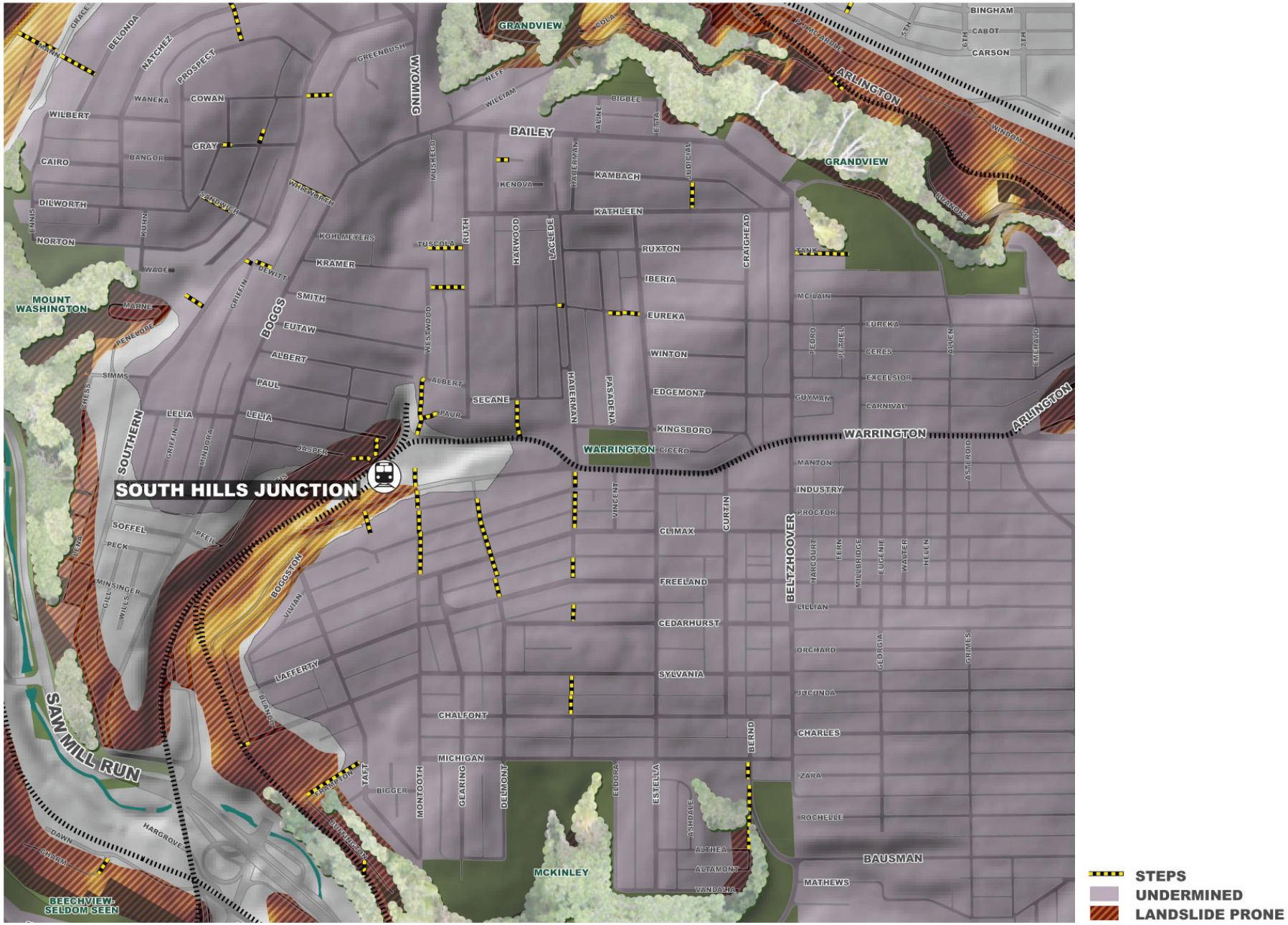


Figure 24. Adverse Geologic Conditions
Source: City of Pittsburgh

MARKET CONDITIONS & POTENTIAL

Commercial Market and Potential

"Unless you live there, there is really no reason to be on Warrington Avenue."

There is no robust commercial activity in the vicinity of South Hills Junction. As Allentown's business district along Warrington Avenue lies east of Beltzhoover Avenue, the consultant team stretched the study area along Warrington east to reach Arlington, capturing the cluster of *Absolutely Allentown!* businesses. The other concentration of commercial services is atop Mt. Washington, where Bailey meets Boggs. In all, the South Hills Junction study area includes a total of 99 businesses and 29 vacant storefronts, which means that 23% of all commercial spaces recorded in the field survey are unoccupied. Twenty six percent of the area's existing commercial uses are services such as insurance and medical or other offices and the remaining spaces are filled by a mix of miscellaneous retail and convenience stores, auto-related uses, a handful of restaurants, beauty salons or barbers, and two laundromats, banks, and bars.

Currently, residents must go elsewhere to meet their shopping needs. The closest grocery is the Foodland on Shiloh Street in Mt. Washington just outside of the study area. Other shopping districts, including South Side Works off of Carson Street, Downtown Pittsburgh, the Strip District, and more suburban style retail along West Liberty and Banksville Avenues in Beechview, compete for local expendable income, as do larger shopping centers in adjacent municipalities.

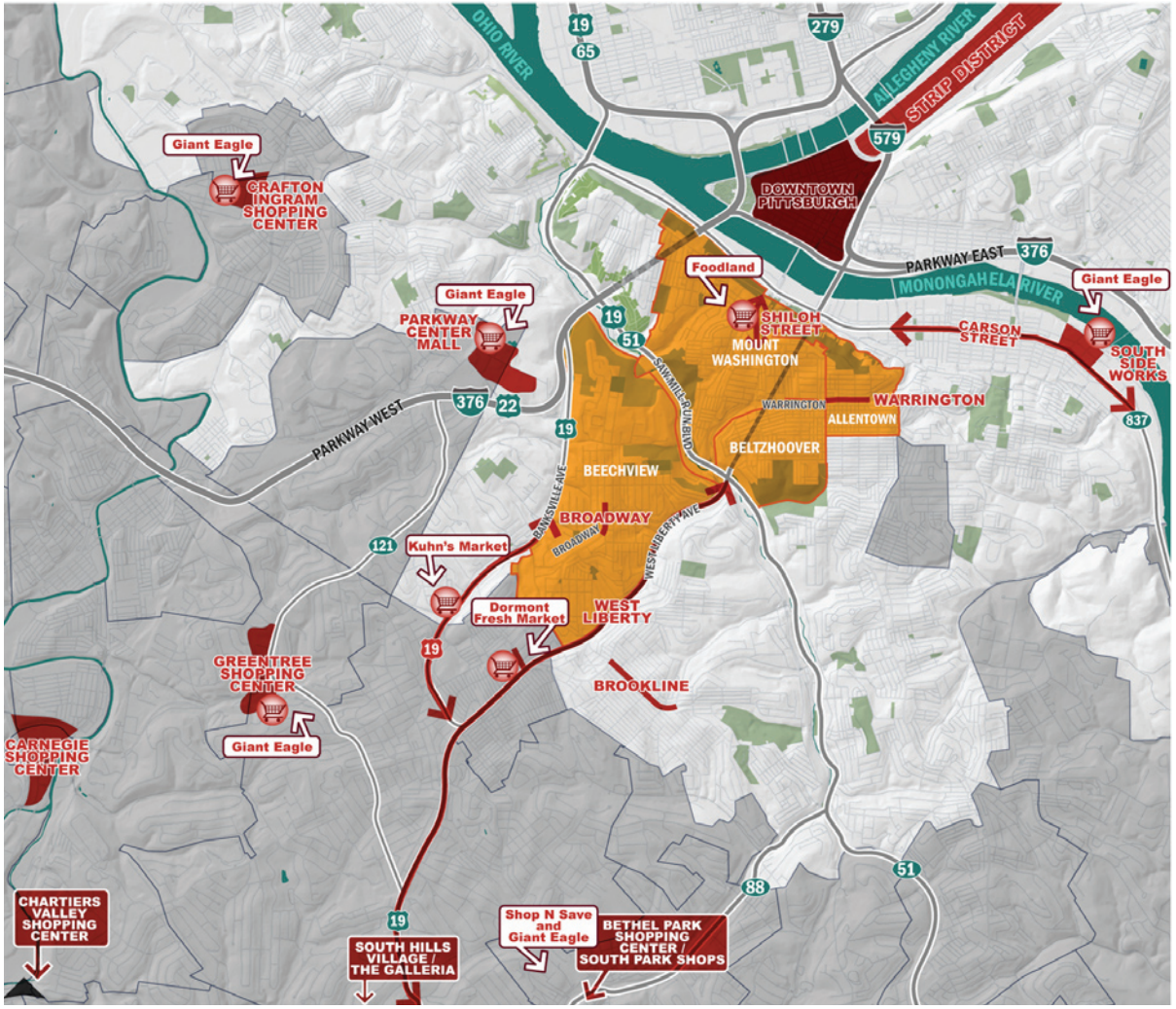


Figure 25. Commercial Competition

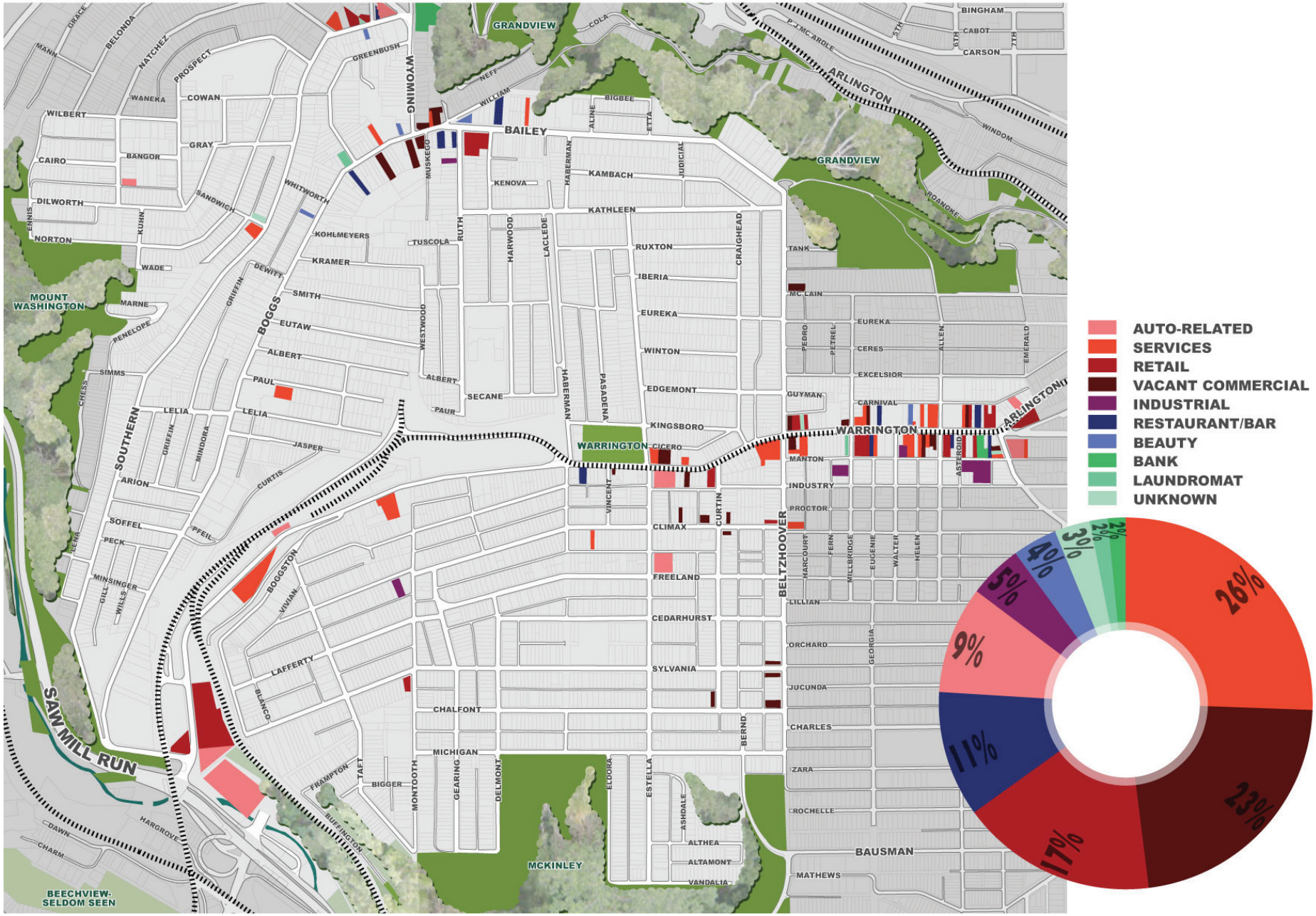


Figure 26. Commercial Uses
Source: Field Survey, 2010

Trade Area

To measure the commercial leakage, Real Estate Strategies (RES) first determined the Retail Trade Area for the South Hills Junction station area, capturing the area within a three-mile radius of the Junction. The trade area does not cross the Monongahela River into Downtown, as both the River and the high cost of Downtown parking create very real barriers in terms of consumer shopping habits. Furthermore, Downtown retail services, if included, would suggest that the South Metro Area neighborhoods are better served by retail than they are in actuality. RES uses the trade area – its number of households and their median household and per capita incomes to estimate consumer spending patterns in the area.

Retail Leakage Analysis

RES analyzed retail expenditure patterns within the trade area, including demand (retail expenditure potential) for residents in the trade area and supply (retail sales) by establishments located in the trade area. Total expenditure potential in the trade area was $972.5 million in 2010, and retail sales (supply) totaled $949.9 million. The trade area was a net importer of expenditures for food and drink including full-service restaurants, limited service eating places, and drinking places with alcoholic beverages. The trade area includes popular gathering/eating/drinking destinations in Pittsburgh such as Carson Street and Station Square, both of which attract expenditures from all parts of the region and beyond. Total grocery store expenditures also exceed demand that is generated by trade area residents, perhaps because households living in Downtown are shopping at food stores located in convenient South Side neighborhoods.

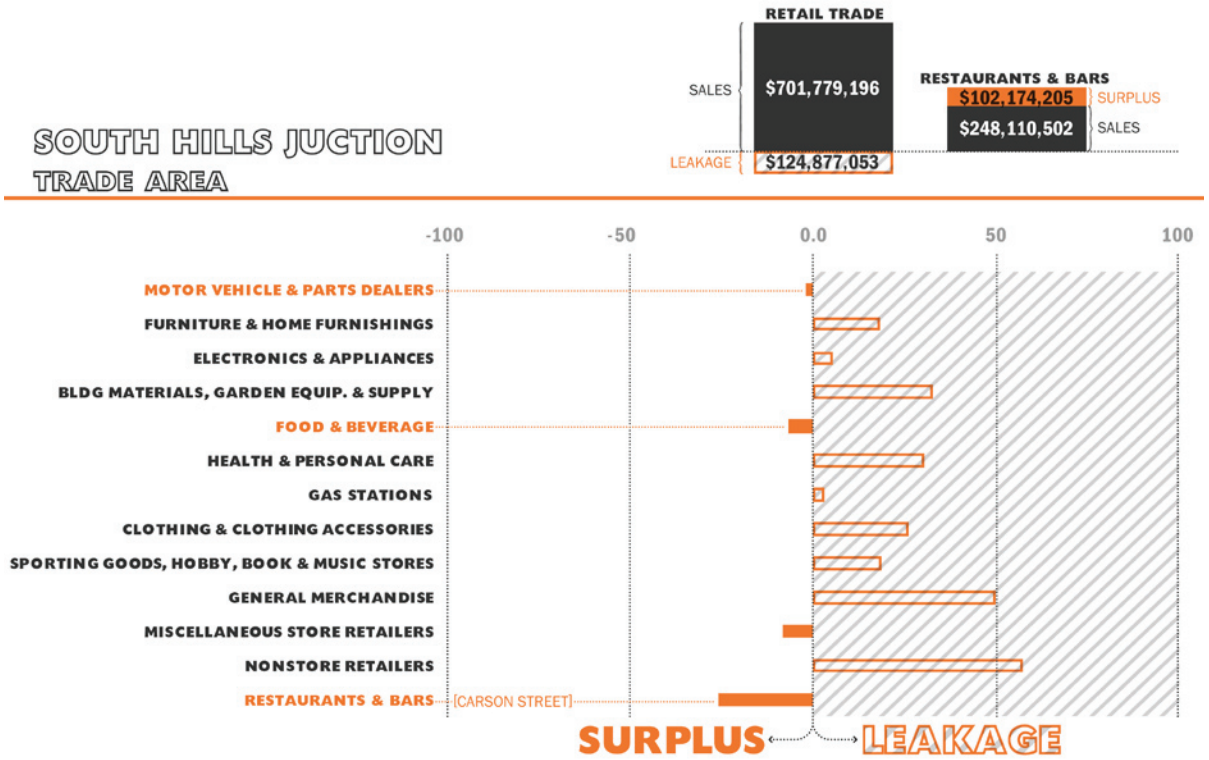


Figure 27. Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Subsector
Source: Real Estate Strategies, ESRI, Infogroup

Despite the commercial sectors that are performing well in the trade area, the commercial market study found that the trade area leaks nearly $125 million per year of local dollars spent. Major leakage areas in descending order by industry subsector include internet retail, general merchandise, building materials and garden supplies, health and personal care, clothing and accessories, hobby and leisure items, and home furnishings. On a gross basis, this level of retail expenditures would be sufficient to support more than 300,000 square feet of additional retail space, and market conditions suggest that for a new development to be viable, it must be a highly visible new destination development large enough and significant enough to attract people who otherwise would not come to the area. It must have sufficient "critical mass" to change the identity of the area while also giving people a reason to come to the South Hills Junction station area. Absent this type of initiative it will be extremely difficult – if not impossible – to re-brand the area.

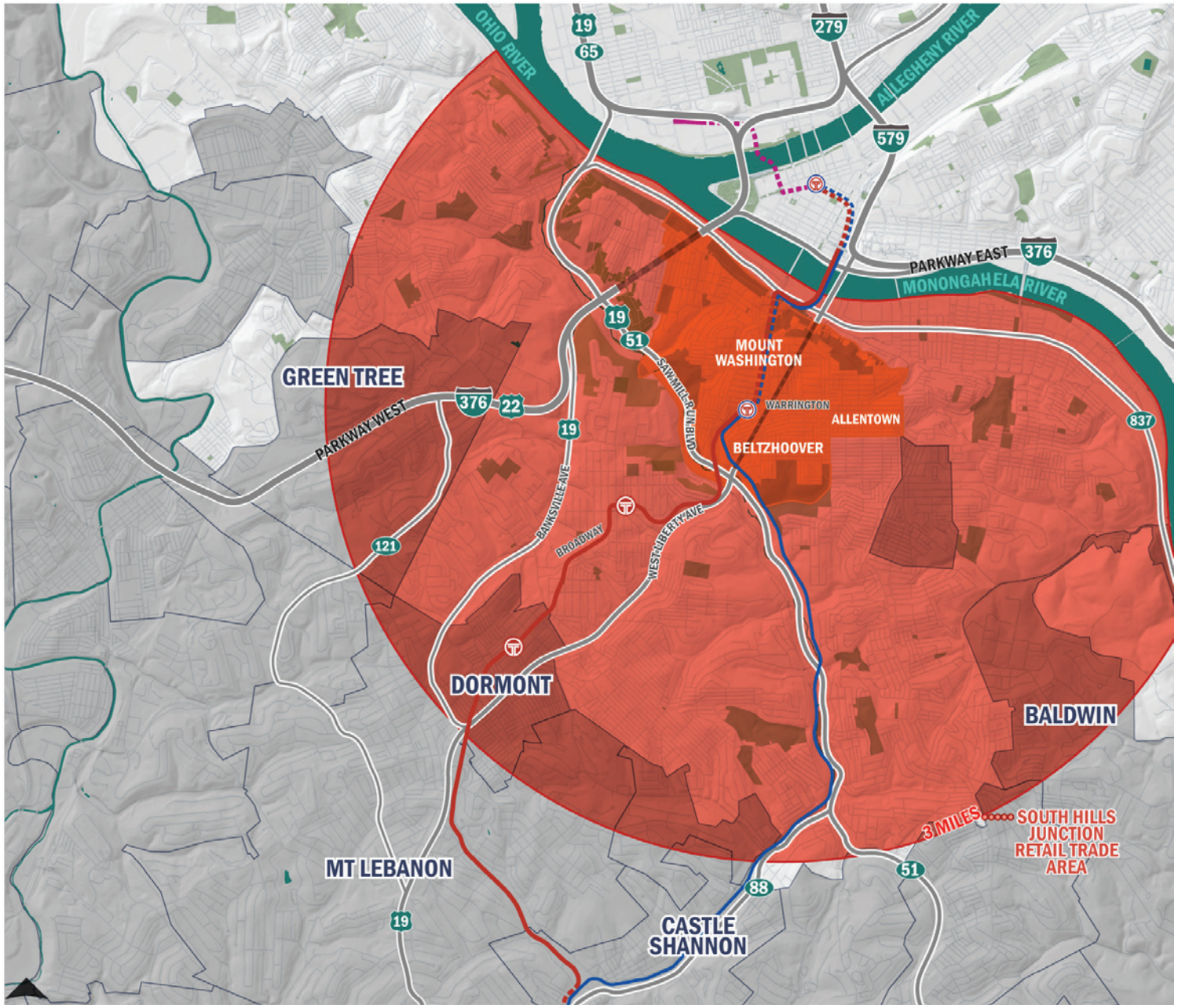


Figure 28. Retail Trade Area
Source: Real Estate Strategies

However, despite the evidence of demand for retail and services in the area and the Junction's transit accessibility, commercial development will face challenges overcoming the perception that the area is not safe as well as the site's lack of visibility and access from a major highway. Given site and market constraints, alternative commercial development plans indicate that it is possible to develop 85,000 to 135,000 square feet of retail near the station.

Tapping the excess demand for the types of retail sales that are now being made outside of the trade area would best be accomplished by attracting one or more "big box" retailers offering a range of retail goods at competitive prices. Due to the site's physical configuration, the maximum square footage that could be offered to a "big box" user is 85,000 square feet. Other potential retailers to occupy the additional space might include some of the following:

Grocery	45,000 SF
Pharmacy	13,000 SF
Medical	4,000 SF
Optometrist	1,000 SF
Phone store	1,000 SF
Athletic wear/shoes	2,000 SF
Auto-related store	2,000 SF
Shoe Store	5,000 SF
Sandwich Shop	2,000 SF
Beauty/barber shops	1,000 SF
Donut Shop	1,000 SF
	77,000 SF

Real Estate Strategies' full commercial market analysis is included as an Appendix to the plan. Development scenarios for the determined market potential at South Hills Junction are explored in the recommendations section.

Varied housing stock in Mt. Washington

Housing Market and Potential

The local homeownership rate varies across neighborhoods. In Mt. Washington, the owner-tenant balance is nearly equal, with 52% of occupied housing units owner-occupied. In Beltzhoover, the homeownership rate is much greater, with 66% of occupied units owner-occupied, suggesting that those who have chosen to remain in the neighborhood despite population loss, vacancy, and the interrelated issues of crime and concentrated poverty are those invested in the neighborhood as homeowners.

As with other areas of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, the residential market area, defined by RES on the basis of postal zip codes[7] from which prospective owners and renters seeking a dwelling in the station area might move, is losing households, and this trend is projected to continue. From 2010 to 2015 ESRI data projects a loss of 1,101 households, from an estimated 42,272 households during 2010 to a projection of 41,171 households in 2015. The main driver of demand for housing is household growth. In the delineated market area there is no overall growth to drive demand.

There are some changes in the number of households in different income bands and age cohorts, and some of these may create demand for housing units near South Hills Junction. While there are large losses of households with incomes below $35,000 in all age cohorts, there also are increases in the number of households with incomes ranging from $50,000 to $74,999 in virtually all age cohorts. Some of this change may be the

7 The zip codes included in RES's defined residential market area include 15210, 15211, 15216, 15220, and 15226.

result of inflation and so-called "bracket creep" rather than an actual increase in affluence. However, younger households are more likely to be energy conscious, to use transit, and to support transit-oriented development. These households could be good candidates for rental and for-sale housing units developed near South Hills Junction.

Mt. Washington, to the north, enjoys the strongest housing market in the station area and represents a stabilizing influence, drawing newcomers particularly to the portions of the neighborhood atop the hill with stunning views of Downtown as well as proximity to neighborhood-serving retail and the Incline to Station Square. Homes on Grandview Avenue and other locations with the similar views are sold at very high prices. Other homes located in areas without views are much more moderate in price. This dichotomy is apparent in data compiled by Trulia.com. The average list price for homes offered for-sale in the neighborhood at the end of April 2011 was $293,580. The median sale price during the first three months of 2011, which was based on 11 sales, was $86,000. The median home price is down 27.1 percent in comparison with 2010, but the decline may be attributable to the mix of units that were sold during each time frame. Five years ago the median sale price was only $60,000. Trulia reports that there still are homes in the neighborhood in the pre-foreclosure and foreclosure process.

Closer to South Hills Junction, the adaptive reuse of the former South Hills High School, which has been converted into a senior independent living complex with commercial/office space, is a very visible redevelopment that anchors and generally stabilizes the southern slope of Mt. Washington. The exception is an area bounded by Kingsboro, Estella, Eureka, and Haberman Streets in Mt. Washington's Estella Micro-Neighborhood located immediately behind the Warrington Recreation Center. Investors have been purchasing homes in this area, and many properties are in need of improvement. Criminal activity has spilled over into this sub-neighborhood, and there are vacant lots and vacant housing units. Despite some deterioration, additional revitalization activity in this micro-neighborhood should have reasonable market support for:

- Mixed-income rental housing that can capitalize on a Mt. Washington location and front on Haberman and/or Kingsboro Streets

- Infill rental or sales housing development in the area bounded by Kingsboro, Estella, Eureka, and Haberman Streets

Vacancy in the Estella Micro-Neighborhood

At present, there is little–or no–real estate market potential in at the Junction itself or south of the Junction in Beltzhoover. In the long-term, after proposed public realm improvements and potential catalytic commercial development has stabilized the area and transformed market dynamics, the development of new for-sale housing building upon the fairly intact pocket of homeownership adjacent to McKinley Park may be possible.

Apart from new construction, the housing stock citywide is old, with the 2009 American Community Survey reporting that the median year housing units in the City were built was 1941, which means that half of the City's units are now at least 70 years old. Age coupled with building condition data confirm that many housing units in the study area are physically and/or functionally obsolete, requiring rehabilitation to bring them up to modern standards.

Again, Real Estate Strategies' full residential market analysis is included as an Appendix to the plan. Development scenarios for the determined market potential at South Hills Junction are explored in the recommendations section.

PUBLIC INPUT

General Themes from the Collaborative Map

Residents and stakeholders were asked to provide their input throughout the process in a number of ways that included collaborative mapping to link their insights and ideas to specific places in the neighborhood and envisioning their neighborhood as they would like to see it in the future. From these exercises, and also interviews and focus group discussions, a number of themes emerged for what the community hopes to see at the Junction and in the adjacent communities:

A Cleaner, Safer Public Realm

"Clean up the trash and vacant buildings!"

"Let's face it – this street (Warrington Avenue) needs a makeover! Nice light poles, hanging baskets, street trees, planters, or street banners could freshen up the appearance of the neighborhood and make it a more desirable destination to live, work, play, shop, and commute."

"These steps are very scary at night – no lights, hazardous treads – and once you get down them, there's not signage to help you get to the T platform safely."

Connections with the Community and Community Assets

"The elimination of the green fence, better lighting and attractive lighting can significantly soften the line between the Junction and the neighborhood and would create a more inviting atmosphere for the Junction."

"There needs to be a better / safer way for pedestrians to get to and from South Hills Junction. Signage to the ramp and steps, a place for people and cars to wait for passengers, an easy way to drop passengers at the Junction."

"This industrial site could be redeveloped into a mixed use project that would connect the Junction to the community and be convenient for those using transit!"

"There should be a better connection between South Hills High and the Station... How about a public elevator?"

"An ADA switchback-style ramp could be constructed in a plot of city land between Haberman and Secane Street that will allow people to approach the facility on foot or in a wheelchair."

"Emerald View Park is part of this area. How can we incorporate this area of Mt. Washington more into the Emerald View? Trailheads and signage needed."

"Haberman Avenue provides a good access route to Grandview Park, part of Emerald View Park. The connection is elaborated in the Park's new 19 mile trail plan."

Automobile Amenities at the Junction

"Provide a parking garage that can generate jobs for people in the community!!"

"It would be nice if cars were allowed to use this parking space to pick up and drop off passengers!"

"Can this land be acquired and converted into a Park 'n Ride lot?"

Businesses to Serve the Community and Transit Riders Alike

"The streets are filled with commuter cars. Capitalize on this with nearby businesses and services to improve the surrounding area."

"Storefront and street improvements to attract more community serving businesses (coffee shop, small grocer, diner, art gallery). Possibly some live/work studios for emerging artists."

ideas & insights collaborative MAP

Provide a PARKING GARAGE that can GENERATE JOBS for PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY!!
It would be nice if CARS WERE ALLOWED TO USE THIS PARKING SPACE TO PICK UP/DROP OFF PASSENGERS!
There is NOWHERE to PARK for the station, so drivers park on NARROW SIDEWALKS.
High School students BREAK INTO CARS parked on Warrington.
COMMUTERS take RESIDENT PARKING.
SECANE
LELIA
JASPER
WARRINGTON
SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION

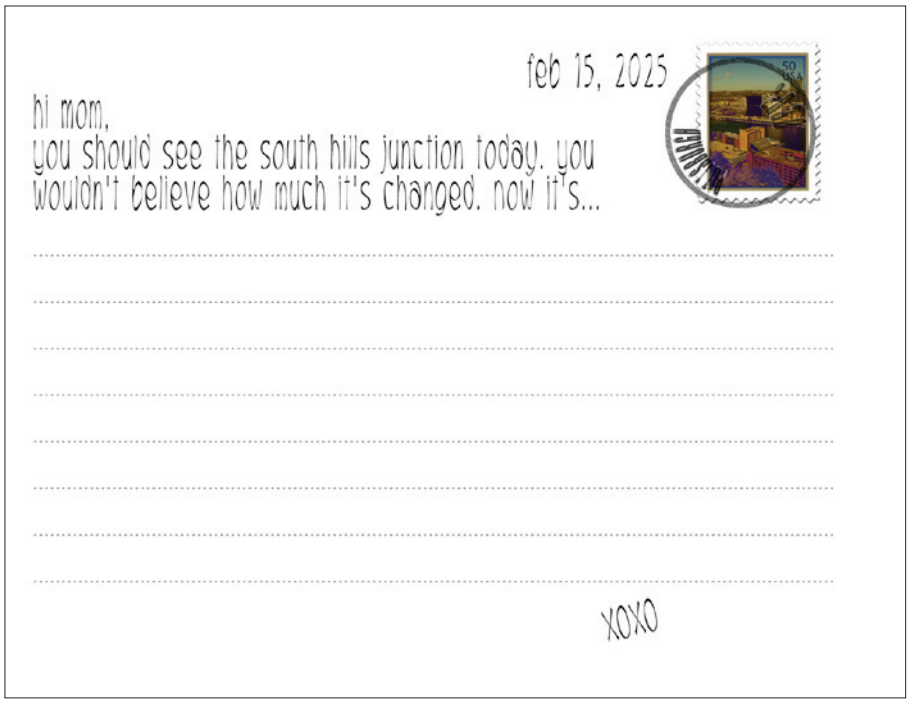
Ideas and Insights about parking near South Hills Junction from the Collaborative Map

ideas & insights collaborative MAP

Ideas for new development near South Hills Junction from the Collaborative Map

Postcards from the Future Vision Statements

Residents from Beltzhoover, Mt. Washington, and Allentown were asked to describe their hopes for South Hills Junction and the surrounding area by imagining what the area will be like 15 years from now once improvements have been made and new development has taken root. Stakeholders wrote their visions on postcards from the future dated 2025, and their visions formed the basis of the recommendations phase for this planning process.



Postcards from the year 2025

...much easier to get to, whether you're walking or driving. I don't suppose it's any closer, but because of the new road and landscaping, it feels a lot closer. There's also a snack bar – like there was before 1960 – and a convenience store there, not to mention the townhouses and apartments along the new road.

... a gateway for commuters from Route 51, [with] the Brown Line supported by a Park-N-Ride at South Hills Junction, [and] an actual gateway for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists off Route 51.

...easy to get to the transit lines. Lots of businesses that are fun for residents to shop and dine at. Really affordable with great housing quality! I can use transit instead of driving so much.

...a destination for transportation, shopping, restaurants, and more. We should meet there soon and hang out!

...beautiful! When you enter SHJ, there are all kinds of shops and convenience stores, such as coffee shops, delis, places to buy toiletries...really a one-stop-shop on your way home from work.

...a multi-use development that has open space, affordable housing, [and a] well-planned Park-n-Ride. It is an inter-modal station that has good physical connections to the business district on Warrington.

...my favorite place to take my kids! The safe park and community feel are awesome. Starting our lives as newlyweds in Mt. Washington in 2009 was the best decision we could have made! And my mother-in-law isn't afraid to drive on Warrington now...

...newly remodeled. There are businesses along Warrington Avenue. There are seating areas with gardens everywhere. There's a parking garage and it's so much easier to access the station. They have an upper platform that has all kinds of stores and a play area for kids.

...[got a] continuation of shops from Arlington Avenue to saw Mill Run Boulevard. A Park-n-Ride lot is developed in Beltzhoover for commuters.

...completely unique. There is nothing else that looks like it in the United States. The City of Pittsburgh, Port Authority, and others worked with this amazing world-famous architect to create something beautiful and grand. I'm so glad the residents worked and committed themselves to the best design available and didn't just accept another ugly glass and concrete building. It's green too!

...better lit, cleaner, secure, looks like someone cares.

They've finally relocated the school bus stop into the Junction, making it safe for pedestrians.

You can sit and wait for the T. It has been opened up, so there is better access for drop off. They even have a park-n-ride, like it used to be, down inside the Junction. Most of the repair shops for autos have been forced to dispose of the junk cars, making it better looking and cleaner.

There are all kinds of businesses, a grocery store and other retail shops. The lighting is so great, you can walk up Warrington Avenue and feel safe, because it is so well lit. There is a nice park area.

So much more well lit and landscaped. There is a bakery, coffee shop, and drugstore. Finally the [dry] cleaner has opened. I am so glad that I am able to walk to the cleaners again.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The analysis and public outreach identified many similar themes and issues facing the TOD potential in South Hills Junction. Prior to developing the recommendations for each station area, a series of key objectives were identified to guide the work. These include:

Foster a Safer Environment

Crime and perceptions of crime in the area tarnish the public image of South Hills Junction, prevent some people from using transit, and deters potential visitors or developers from spending time or investing money in the area. Key to any transit-centered improvement and development strategy must be a targeted initiative to improve public safety for those who live, work, play, and shop in the area, as well as for those passing through.

Expand the Presence of the Junction

Sitting at the bottom of the "bowl" the Junction, and in particular the station itself, is almost entirely invisible from surrounding streets. To promote the station and the extensive service it offers, attention will need to be paid to wayfinding, art, and lighting far beyond the traditional confines of the Junction. Improvement and branding strategies are needed for primary intersections in surrounding neighborhoods that help to better integrate the Junction into the fabric of these communities.

(Re) Connect and Improve Access

Streets surrounding the Junction are in poor condition and many of the stair access ways are in need of significant improvement. Street improvements need to be identified that connect Mt. Washington, Beltzhoover, and Allentown to the Junction but also to each other as a part of a coordinated initiative to improve local infrastructure and access.

Change the Culture of Driving

The ultimate goal of TOD is to reduce traffic congestion and get people out of their cars. While we will never convince some people to abandon their cars for another form of transportation, a growing percentage would choose another form of transportation if it was safe, easy, and accessible to do so. The Junction should be designed as a hub for transportation alternatives, such as public transit, biking, or walking, to make the switch from driving as easy as possible. The long-term potential is fewer cars on the road and a better environment.

Create a New Center for the Surrounding Communities

South Hills Junction occupies the space in between communities. It is effectively in neither Mt. Washington or Beltzhoover nor has it ever played a prominent economic or social role in either community. The extensive public transit service and number of riders that pass through the Junction, combined with a potentially large and publicly-owned site presents the opportunity to create a market by building a large amount of new retail services connected to the station and nearby communities. This study evaluates these possibilities and examines potential additional strategies to improve Beltzhoover and Mt. Washington adjacent to the Junction.

Think Incrementally

Building new services at the Junction will take a lot of careful investment and time. In the meantime, there are opportunities to improve access and address many quality of life concerns raised by residents through small, incremental steps. These recommendations are as important to re-positioning the Junction as those focused on a build out of available space.

Reinforce Community Initiatives

Investments around both station areas are guided by former plans and community-led initiatives. Mt. Washington CDC's Housing Plan identified a wide range of strategies, developments, and programs that seek to improve key streets leading to the Junction. The recommendations and strategies in this plan must augment this prior work, reinforcing the priorities and goals set by local residents and stakeholders.

Be a Model

The State of Pennsylvania TRID legislation is a new and exciting concept that has the potential to bring financial resources, as well as political ones, to make TODs in Pittsburgh a tangible reality. This Study extends the work completed outside the City in Dormont and Mt. Lebanon to create an integrated transit corridor that adds value to neighborhoods facing a range of challenges. For this reason, this Study's process and findings should serve as a model to other neighborhoods that seek similar consideration as a designated TRID district and strive for both short-term fixes and long-term initiatives that will transform the stations into active centers of their respective communities.

View of the Junction looking west

IV RECOMMENDATIONS

The TRID plan presents an opportunity to test the potential of transit-oriented development and capital improvements to the public realm as drivers not only of economic development and increased transit ridership, but also of neighborhood revitalization and improved quality of life. With these goals in mind, the recommendations propose strategies for reinventing South Hills Junction as a safe and beautiful destination and hub of activity that provides a range of services beyond transit to local residents as well as commuters, consumers, and passersby. The recommendations are organized into three categories:

- **SHORT TERM** improvements involving surface treatments like public safety investments, wayfinding signage, public art, and greening that can be accomplished relatively quickly to change public perception about the Junction as well as draw attention and strengthen connections to the major transit resource that is currently nestled between communities
- **PUBLIC REALM AND INFRASTRUCTURE** improvements that balance the needs of pedestrians, transit riders, and cars
- **DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS** to test the long-term residential and commercial development potential adjacent to South Hills Junction

SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS

1 SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS

The following recommendations are immediate steps that should be taken in the next one to two years to make South Hills Junction safer, easier to find, and more visually interesting and attractive for residents, commuters, and those passing through.

1.1 Create a Block Watch and Junction Patrol

Public safety is a major concern among residents who live near South Hills Junction and a deterrent to transit riders – both those from adjacent neighborhoods and those transferring lines at the transit hub. Though crime in the area is a problem distinct from local transit, the Junction's location and lack of pedestrian or commuter amenities render both pedestrians and drivers vulnerable to crimes against people and property. The lengthy, often isolated pedestrian routes into the bowl of the Junction become scary at night or when traveling alone, and cars parked on small residential streets with low traffic become targets for break-ins and theft.

Several initiatives are already underway that this recommendation seeks to build on. The Public Safety Action Team has been meeting monthly in the Hilltop Area and working to organize block groups. Its representatives attended a Pittsburgh Safe Neighborhoods Training. Additionally Mount Washington CDC, in coordination with the Allentown CDC, conducted a public safety assessment of Warrington Avenue with recommendations that incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design best practices.

Focusing on South Hills Junction, community leaders and residents from nearby Beltzhoover, Mt. Washington, and Allentown should collaborate with the Pittsburgh Police and Port Authority Police to organize a comprehensive community policing strategy – at the Junction as well as throughout the adjacent residential blocks – that includes a Block Watch and Junction Patrol and a Walk Home Escort Program.

- **Block Watch and Junction Patrol** – The Block Watch (often called town watch) and Junction Patrol should comprise resident volunteers committed to working with City and Port Authority police to patrol local streets, corners, and pathways to South Hills Junction as well as the Junction itself. For example, in Beechview the Block Watch has developed in close collaboration with the District Office and Zone Commander, inviting two-way communication between the community and the police force, and community members report a noticeable drop in crime since they have taken a stand and built a collective resistance to criminal activity in the area.

Sample Block Watch and Junction Patrol T-Shirts

- **Walk Home Escort Program** – Escort programs are typically targeted to help neighborhood residents walk home safely from evening meetings, classes, or other functions. Near South Hills Junction, this idea can be adapted to provide safe walks home from the station for those who feel unsafe traveling on foot alone. Pairs of volunteer escorts should be on call through the Block Watch and Junction Patrol after dark and accessible via a publicized dispatch number. Residents who do not feel comfortable walking home alone should be encouraged to make use of this volunteer service – and return the favor by volunteering to act as a Walk Home Escort once a month or so.

If necessary, the Block Watch and Junction Patrol could also act as an advocacy group, working with the Port Authority and Pittsburgh Police to establish a police mini-station at the Junction for added security and assistance. A mini-station would establish a more regular police presence in the area while also keeping an eye out for the safety of residents and riders and strengthening communication between the Port Authority Police and the Pittsburgh Police.

1.2 Install emergency call boxes

Many of the stations on the East and West Busways are analogous to the South Hills Junction station, situated in isolated locations below the street level. All of these stations and several of the Port Authority Park 'n Ride lots serving the Busways have emergency call boxes among their amenities. Calls are fielded by the Port Authority Police.

Solar-powered emergency call boxes could be coupled with new lighting, Recommendation 2.1

South Hills Junction, with its limited visibility from the street and long, winding pedestrian routes into the below-grade station would benefit from such call boxes so that passengers or people waiting for the T or bus can call for help or to report a problem should one arise.

As seen on many college campuses, emergency call boxes can also be strategically attached to light poles. The addition of a call box to the various staircases and pedestrian routes into the Junction would help foster a feeling of safety and deter crime near the station. As they have done at several Park 'n Ride lots, the Port Authority should install such hotline phone boxes at the Junction and along pedestrian routes leading to it.

1.3 Invest in legible signage to help brand the station and improve wayfinding at existing entrances

Because of its sunken location and resulting low profile, South Hills Junction is hidden from view. The topography throughout the surrounding neighborhoods further limits visibility into the station area, as many residential streets, particularly in Mt. Washington, taper off along steep slopes into dead ends. To an outsider, the station entrances appear as closely guarded local secrets, unannounced and easily overlooked.

To expand the Junction's presence in surrounding communities and help new transit riders and visitors access the station, the City should engage a graphic designer and invest in legible, attention-grabbing signage that not only improves wayfinding at existing entrances, but also helps brand the station. In Mt. Washington, key locations for such signage include Boggs Avenue at Lelia and Jasper Streets to assure pedestrians that there is, in fact, a major transit resource in close proximity and accessible via a staircase at the end of the street as well as at the foot of Harwood Street near South Hills High. The signage should be repeated to signal the actual entrance to the staircases as well, as the current signage is miniscule and ineffective.

In Beltzhoover, station wayfinding signage should be deployed at the intersection of Haberman and Warrington, where confusing signs forbidding automobile access can be misinterpreted to suggest that pedestrians are also forbidden from using this key ADA-accessible entrance into the Junction. The stairway off of Warrington at Montooth and the ramp near the mouth of Boggston Avenue should be highlighted with similar signage so that transit riders can feel confident in their approach to the station and passersby can recognize routes into the station as such.

Figure 29. Sketch of Station Wayfinding along Boggs Avenue

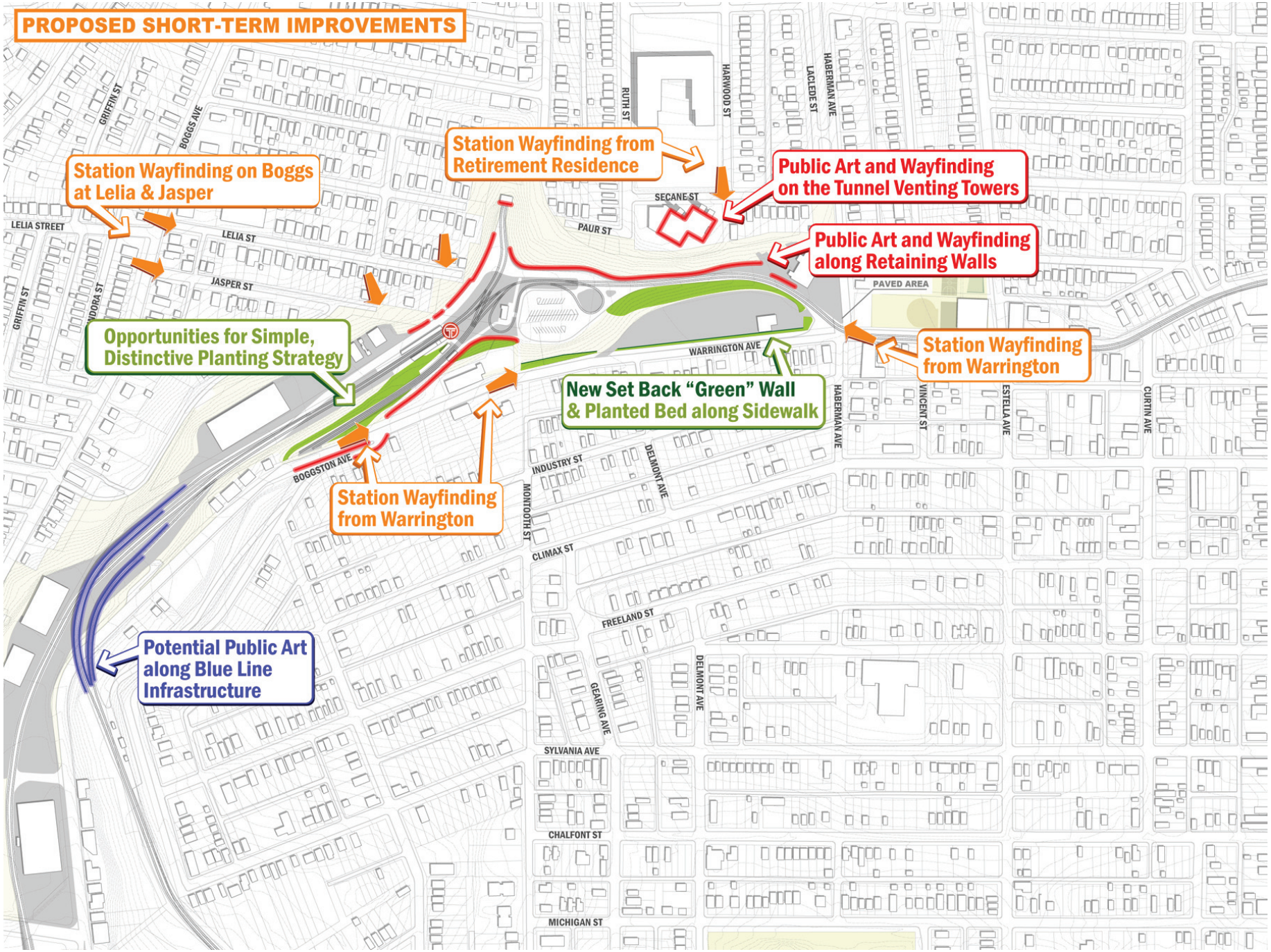


Figure 30. Summary Diagram of Proposed Short-Term Improvements

1.4 Consider other surfaces for murals or public art to help people navigate their way to the station

Despite the interest in transit-oriented development and community revitalization in the South Metro Area and the dialog that has been continued throughout this planning process, there is still a lack of awareness and a healthy skepticism about the station area's potential. Although the catalytic commercial and residential developments described later in this plan will dramatically transform the area and its identity, some simpler initiatives can and should move forward quickly to demonstrate momentum and a handful of immediate tangible results to emerge from the TRID Study.

Beyond the wayfinding signage, the City, Port Authority, and community groups should partner with local and non-local artists to reinvent dull surfaces with public art that helps people navigate to the Junction while brightening and beautifying the local pedestrian environment. Surfaces worthy of consideration and an artful makeover include:

- **The ubiquitous retaining walls reinforcing the steep slopes framing the Junction** – The curving concrete wall that lines the path to the station from Haberman and Warrington represents the largest opportunity to add a simple splash of color to activate the walk down to the Junction. The steel slatted retaining wall on the south side of Warrington near Boggston presents an alternative opportunity, perhaps for a green wall with plantings embedded in the setback portions of the structure. The murals at the East Busway in East Liberty offer a precedent for dressing up the blank walls.

Existing retaining wall leading into the Junction

Figure 31. Rendering of Mural and Station Wayfinding Proposed for Retaining Wall

- **The venting towers for the Liberty Tunnels** – The iconic Liberty Tunnel venting towers stand just above the Junction, and could be embellished to call attention to the station area below. Because the structures are handsome in their own right, a lighting treatment would be preferable to a paint treatment. The towers could be up-lit from below or outlined with LED tube lighting to showcase their architectural detail and would glow at night like a beacon for the station area.

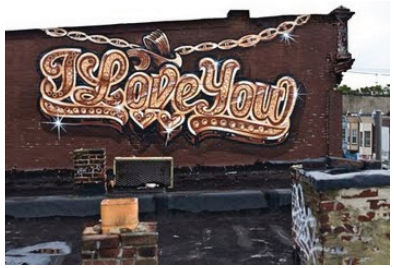
- **The concrete structure of the elevated Blue Line** – The Blue Line's elevated concrete structure as it passes over Warrington Avenue and the Port Authority lands south of the Junction is also well suited for a colorful treatment. A mural here is particularly visible from the Red Line, and would brighten the daily commutes of people passing by – a love note for transit riders, much like Steve Powers' *Love Letter to Philadelphia* multi-part mural project visible to people riding the elevated transit line through West Philadelphia.

- **The substation adjacent to the staircase into the Junction** – The industrial landscape of the substation that abuts the stairs down to the Junction at Montooth and Warrington also presents an unusual series of surfaces for a public art installation. A glow-in-the-dark paint treatment would give a visual illusion of electricity at night while also drawing attention in a fun way to the surroundings at the Junction.

Figure 32. Sketches of Liberty Tunnel Towers as Station Beacons

Existing Blue Line infrastructure

Figure 33. Rendering of Blue Line Paint Treatment



One of 50 "Love Letters" visible from Philadelphia's Elevated Market-Frankford Subway Line by Steve Powers with Mural Arts
Source: falafelforthesoul.blogspot.com

Substation near the Junction

1.5 Develop a simple, distinctive planting strategy for green spaces within and approaching the station area

Beyond paint and lighting, plants can offer a simple, cost-effective means of adding color, texture, movement, and visual interest to the grounds at South Hills Junction. The City and Port Authority should work with a landscape architect and/or local greening organization to devise a low-maintenance planting strategy to enliven the grassy berm at the north side of the rail tie site (pictured in Figure 31) as well as the gently-sloping entrance ramp at Warrington and Boggston that is currently flanked by grassy ground cover. As winter warms into spring and blossoms appear, even a thin strip planted with a single-species or a scattering of native wildflowers can suggest a new day for South Hills Junction.

1.6 Replace the existing green wall along Warrington with a new "green" wall and planted bed along the sidewalk

The existing green wall along Warrington Avenue is infamous. It is ugly and in poor condition, with multiple panels that have been replaced by plywood, only some of which have been painted green to blend in. At about eight feet tall, the wall, which fences off the Port Authority's rail tie parcel, blocks all sight-lines into the Junction, says nothing about the station or what lies behind it, presents a hideous front door to the station, and contributes to a claustrophobic pedestrian experience by closely hugging the already narrow sidewalk.

Replacing the existing green wall with a new "green" wall that is artfully designed and planted with vertical panels or vines would transform the pedestrian approach to South Hills Junction along Warrington Avenue. The City and community groups should work with the Port Authority to relocate the wall slightly, so that it is set back approximately six feet. This small adjustment would not interfere with Port Authority operations or any permanent structures and would make room for a planted bed along the sidewalk. The planted bed would help the "green" wall register as greener, add some color and texture to the walkway, and make the narrow pedestrian space feel wider. In short, this strategy would provide the Junction, and Warrington Avenue, with a green and welcoming front door.

Existing green wall along Warrington Avenue

Figure 34. Rendering of New Green Wall and Planted Bed Along Warrington Avenue

PUBLIC REALM OR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

2 PUBLIC REALM AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The public realm improvements are focused on the station area, the adjacent parcels used for Port Authority operations, and the main paths and routes that people use to access South Hills Junction. They focus on improving the basics such as lighting, landscaping, and land management near the station, fostering stronger and more diverse pedestrian connections to the Junction, and incorporating transit amenities to make taking the T an easier and more appealing option than driving Downtown or out to the nearby suburbs.

STATION AREA BASICS

Pedestrian-scale lighting, landscaping, and vacant land management are three basic treatments that will help the station area appear better cared for and feel like a safer place to be.

2.1 Introduce lighting in the neighborhood, along steps, throughout the station area, and along Warrington Avenue

Lack of lighting is a major concern for residents who access transit at the Junction, particularly for those traveling past dark; people noted that there is a lack of lighting in Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover approaching the station, along the steps and pathways to the station, throughout the station area itself, and along the length of Warrington Avenue as well.

Where there is adequate sun, solar-powered Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting should be considered as a less expensive and more flexible option for adding additional pedestrian-scale lighting throughout the Junction, along Warrington Avenue, and within surrounding residential blocks. Traditional, high-pressure sodium lighting is often less bright and more costly to maintain. LED lighting in contrast is brighter, can be engineered to highlight sidewalks and pathways thus reducing light pollution in the sky, and greatly reduces maintenance costs. Upgrading fixtures to LED will require an upfront investment, but those costs can be recouped from energy savings alone within five years. Furthermore, the placement of the lights when compared with traditional lighting is more flexible, as solar-powered lights do not need to hook up to the existing power infrastructure.

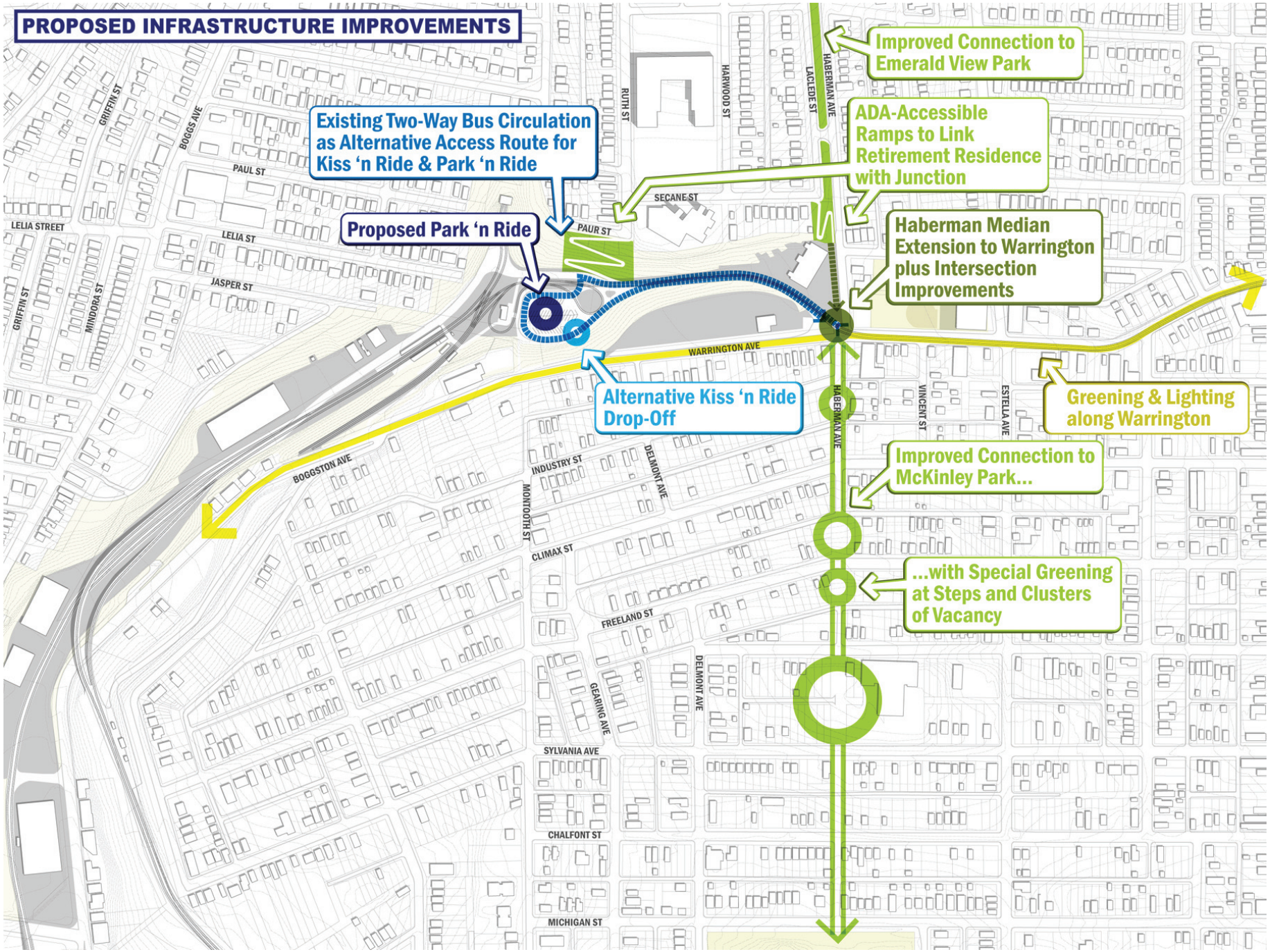


Figure 35. Summary Diagram of Proposed Public Realm and Infrastructure Improvements

Existing staircase leading to the Junction

For a complementary decorative approach, LED tube lighting presents a cost-effective and easy way to add some light and visual interest to unique architectural features, such as the roofline of the Junction shelters and the staircase railings. Beyond the added luminosity, the glowing lights would also function to lead the way into the station.

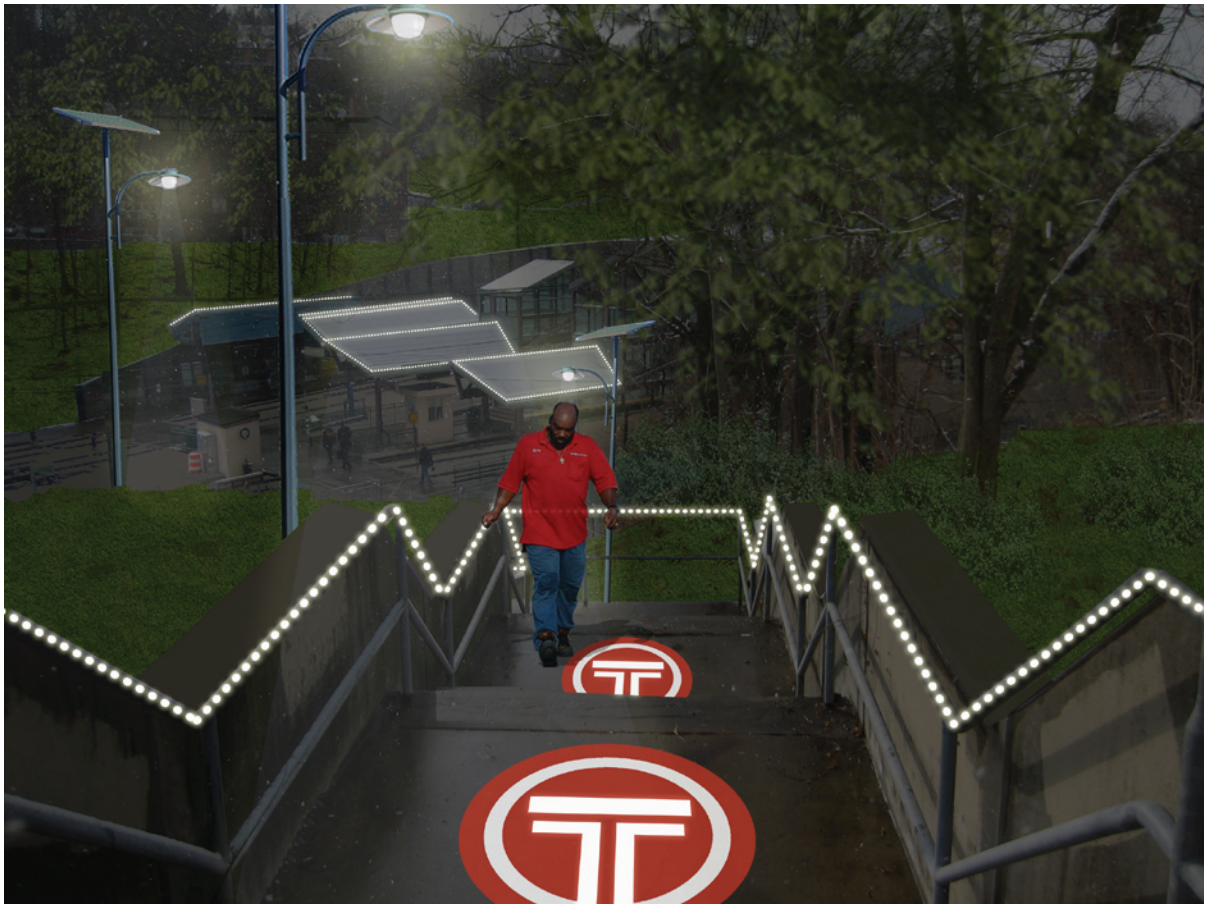


Figure 36. Day and Nighttime Renderings of Station Staircase Improved with Wayfinding and LED Lighting

2.2 Clean and green in targeted land stabilization areas in Beltzhoover

In addition to the dark streets and pathways that lead to the Junction, many residents referenced the vacant lots and untended hillsides in Beltzhoover as a quality of life problem that must be addressed as part of a station area improvement plan. Vacant lots should be cleaned of trash and weeds, planted with a simple grass ground cover, and kept well mowed and tended throughout the growing season to communicate to the public that the land, while vacant, is cared for. Stewardship of key vacant lots will not only improve the station's image and the image of adjacent residential blocks but will also help passersby feel safer.

A targeted vacant land stabilization strategy should include vacant lots and steep slopes along Warrington Avenue, as well as clusters of vacant land along Industry and Climax Streets between Montooth Street and Curtin Avenue, where many blocks in close proximity to the Junction have experienced heavy disinvestment.

Distressed or failing structures along Warrington or near any of the station entrances, including those along Haberman and Kingsboro should be considered priorities for demolition or rehabilitation too.

Some small greening efforts are underway in Beltzhoover. These should be encouraged and strategically located for maximum visibility.

FOSTER A SAFER PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Even if lighting, landscaping, and vacant land management are deployed as tools to make the Junction look and feel safer, the station area will not truly be a safe place for people to navigate until several additional improvements are made to the pedestrian environment to foster safer connections with the Junction for those on foot.

2.3 Add crosswalks and slow traffic on Warrington Avenue

The traffic volumes on Warrington Avenue are not tremendously high, but a walk along the street can nonetheless feel somewhat treacherous. Vehicles travel at high speeds, and because the curbs are highly eroded and the sidewalks are so narrow, there is little to no protection from vehicles for pedestrians walking along Warrington. Calming traffic and integrating zebra crosswalks at station entrances on Warrington and near Warrington Recreation Center will improve pedestrian safety, which will encourage more people to walk in the area.

Traffic calming could be accomplished a number of ways, including adding speed bumps or speed tables near station entrances, reducing the lane width in certain locations, providing dividers in the street to force traffic not to drive in a straight line, or striping channelization along the corridor.

Existing entrance to the Junction on Warrington -- almost invisible!

Figure 37. Rendering of Crosswalk, Wayfinding Signage, and New Green Wall to Improve Station Entrance and Safety

2.4 Improve sidewalks from Warrington in Allentown to Saw Mill Run Boulevard

The sidewalks on Warrington Avenue are quite narrow in places and are generally in poor condition. Funding should be allocated to improve the sidewalks on Warrington Avenue, with priority given to the blocks between Arlington and Boggston Avenues to serve the pedestrian-oriented business district in Allentown (Absolutely Allentown!) and the station area. However, sidewalk improvements should be extended south to Saw Mill Run Boulevard if possible to improve the full length of Warrington and serve people who may be accessing Beltzhoover, Mt. Washington, Allentown, and/or South Hills Junction on foot from Route 51.

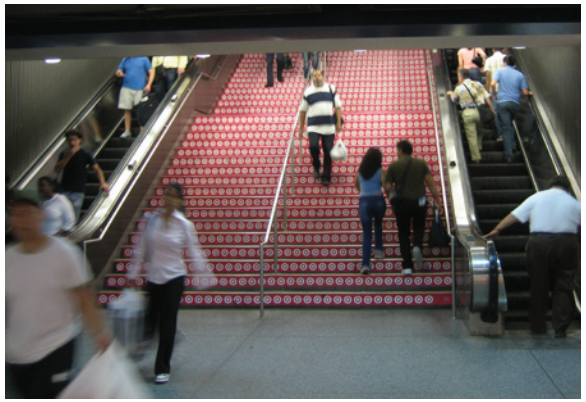
These STEPS ARE VERY SCARY at night!
NO LIGHTS, HAZARDOUS TREADS - once you get down them, there's NO SIGNAGE to help you get to the T platform safely.!

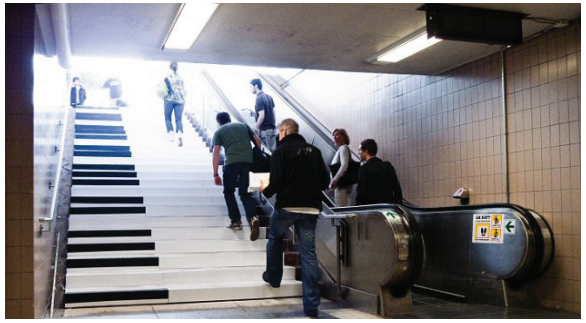
Existing stair condition at Warrington Avenue

2.5 Rebuild the entrance steps to the Junction

Neighborhood steps are a common feature in Pittsburgh, particularly in the South Hills with the dramatic local topography. Citywide, these staircases are a source of pride and conversation; books have been written on the subject. However, many staircases were built decades ago, and upon closer examination would benefit not only from better maintenance (clearing the leaves in the fall, shoveling the snow, and salting the ice in the winter) but also from structural improvements and even an overall re-design.

At South Hills Junction, four of the six currently open entrances involve staircases, and a fifth staircase at Paur Street where Ruth Street ends has been closed due to disrepair. To support transit ridership at the Junction, every effort must be made to keep the stairs clear of leaves, branches, snow, litter, and other obstructions and in good repair. Beyond additional functional and decorative lighting discussed in Recommendation 2.1, the staircases leading to the Junction should be rebuilt, with new treads to replace those that are crumbling. In addition to practical design improvements, the staircases at the Junction should also be rebuilt with creativity, dressing up the risers with public art – imagery or perhaps text from a poem – to transform the chore of climbing stairs into an enjoyable and compelling experience with the added benefit of exercise. Artful steps leading to the Junction would create an additional destination and branding element, encouraging people to explore the station area and giving local residents a new source of joy and pride in their everyday environment.





Stairs can be used for art, advertisements, or activity. Top: Los Angeles Green Line stairs with poetry engraved in risers; Middle: Target advertising on risers at New York's Penn Station; Bottom: piano stairs in Stockholm

2.6 Design new elevators at key entrances to the Junction

While steps are commonplace in Pittsburgh and climbing hills fails to make local residents blink, the sunken location of the Junction poses access challenges, particularly for elderly or handicapped residents and those with limited mobility. With the recent construction of 106 senior residences at South Hills High, the need for public elevators built in conjunction with the parking garage proposed in Recommendation 3.2 has become more pressing. Because of the location of the T stop in relation to South Hills High, an elevator to bring people from Mt. Washington to the station area would still require some lateral movements, both south and west, on foot or in a wheelchair, so the sidewalks and ramping leading to and from the elevator would need to be ADA-accessible as well.

In Beltzhoover, it would be feasible to create a small pedestrian bridge from Warrington past the substation that terminates at an elevator bank to bring people down to the station platforms, offering a more direct route into the station.

While this recommendation presents a costly solution to helping residents descend into the Junction, it also presents an opportunity to design new markers or beacons for the Junction. If elevators are introduced to the station area, the City and Port Authority should work with an architect to develop unique elevator towers and shafts that add interest to the station rather than settling for a purely functional piece of new infrastructure. Revenue generated by the TRID or proposed parking garage should be used to diffuse or cover elevator maintenance costs.

2.7 Create ramps from Mt. Washington to the Junction

As an alternative to elevators and to complement to the stairs, the City should explore the possibility of creating new ramps to facilitate the descent from Secane Street in Mt. Washington to the Junction. Because of the steep topography, the ramps would have to switch back and forth at a gentle enough grade to be navigable in an electric wheelchair.

There are two possibilities for a ramp location. One could wind down from the intersection of Secane Street and Laclede on Port Authority-owned land to meet the current salt shed site. This ramp would help people navigate a grade change of 15 feet over a distance of 70 feet. However, if the Haberman median proposed in Recommendation 2.8 is implemented, the extension of Laclede Street would serve the same purpose, connecting South Hills High with the Junction via a wheelchair accessible path.

The alternative ramp location would descend from the foot of Ruth Street, switching back and forth four times to navigate a grade change of 65 feet over a distance of 145 feet. Though this ramp is longer and the elevation change steeper, its end point is much closer to the Junction than the first ramp alternative presented and is thus preferred by the Port Authority.

The ramping option, while less costly than the elevators proposed in Recommendation 2.6, would nonetheless require resources not only for construction but also to ensure that the ramps be kept clear of snow, ice, leaves, branches, and other debris.

2.8 Extend the median along Haberman to Warrington Avenue

In addition to stair repair or replacement and the possible introduction of elevators at the Junction, pedestrian and streetscape improvements should be made to Haberman, as it is a main thoroughfare leading to the Junction. It is one of the few streets that crosses Warrington Avenue between Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover, and it links Grandview Park at the top of Mt. Washington with McKinley Park at the southern edge of Beltzhoover; Warrington Recreation Center stands in the middle as a resource for both neighborhoods. In Mt. Washington, much of Haberman is lined with an overgrown median that divides Haberman and Laclede Street, so in some ways, Haberman already feels like a green connector street.

Haberman's median should be extended from Secane Street where it currently ends south to Warrington Avenue, giving Haberman a grander presence as an entrance point to Mt. Washington and gateway to the Emerald View Park systems atop Mt. Washington. Extending the median would require the relocation of the Port Authority's salt shed to allow Laclede street to be drawn down on the west side of the median as the southbound route to Warrington. Intersection improvements would be necessary to coordinate traffic into the Junction, but widening the intersection of at Warrington and introducing a green median and pedestrian refuge, would simplify the geometries of the existing intersection in which Haberman jogs westward south of Warrington. Streetscape improvements, such as taming the median's vegetation, would also be necessary to improve the visual quality of the pedestrian passage.

A new grading and planting strategy and possibly a staircase for the median should be explored in conjunction with the median extension such that the median becomes a navigable linear park-like finger reaching from the Junction to Grandview Park above.

2.9 Implement a greening program for Haberman through Beltzhoover

Greening and landscaping investments along Haberman's median north of Warrington in Mt. Washington should be reflected south of Warrington in Beltzhoover as well, strengthening Haberman's role as a connector of neighborhoods, park spaces, and transit resources. As there is no median along Haberman in Beltzhoover, a landscaping strategy of grassy strips and street trees to green the corridor should travel along the edges of the street, following sidewalks and staircases where Haberman does not offer passageway for cars. In places where vacancy is concentrated along Haberman, those lots should become focus points for signature greening initiatives, inviting more intensive and colorful plantings beyond grassy strips and street trees. Similarly, the staircases represent opportunities for a more intense landscaping treatment to encourage walking in the neighborhood and to the station. Figure 35 calls out special greening opportunities created by staircases and clustered vacancy with green circles.

The deteriorated curbs, sidewalks, and staircases along Haberman should be rebuilt for safety and easier maintenance, but also to complete a renewed image for Haberman throughout Beltzhoover.

Existing path along Haberman from Beltzhoover toward Junction

Figure 38. Rendering of Greening along Haberman in Beltzhoover and Extended Median in Mt. Washington

2.10 Integrate trailheads for Emerald View Park Trail at the Junction

South Hills Junction is the strategic southern-most point of the 19 new miles of existing and proposed tails within Pittsburgh's Emerald View Park. The network of trails reaches the Junction so as to link the trail system with public transportation, so that people from all over the City and region can come to explore the South Hills' natural environment and striking vistas. The map of existing and proposed trails shows Palm Garden Station near Southern and Boggs as the main southern gateway to the Emerald View Park trail system, but a greened and improved Haberman Avenue, as described in Recommendation 2.8, should be added as an additional pathway to Emerald View.

Clear signage and trailheads must be incorporated at the Junction directing people to the various trails and adding an additional programmatic use for the Junction – that of a base camp or visitor center for urban explorers. Emerald View Park signage and trailheads will also strengthen the relationship and link between the Junction and the amenities atop Mt. Washington, thereby improving the station's status and public perception.

For those exploring the trails on bicycle, the Junction could offer bicycle amenities such as a tool bench for minor repairs and bicycle parking. A water fountain would serve both hikers and bikers.

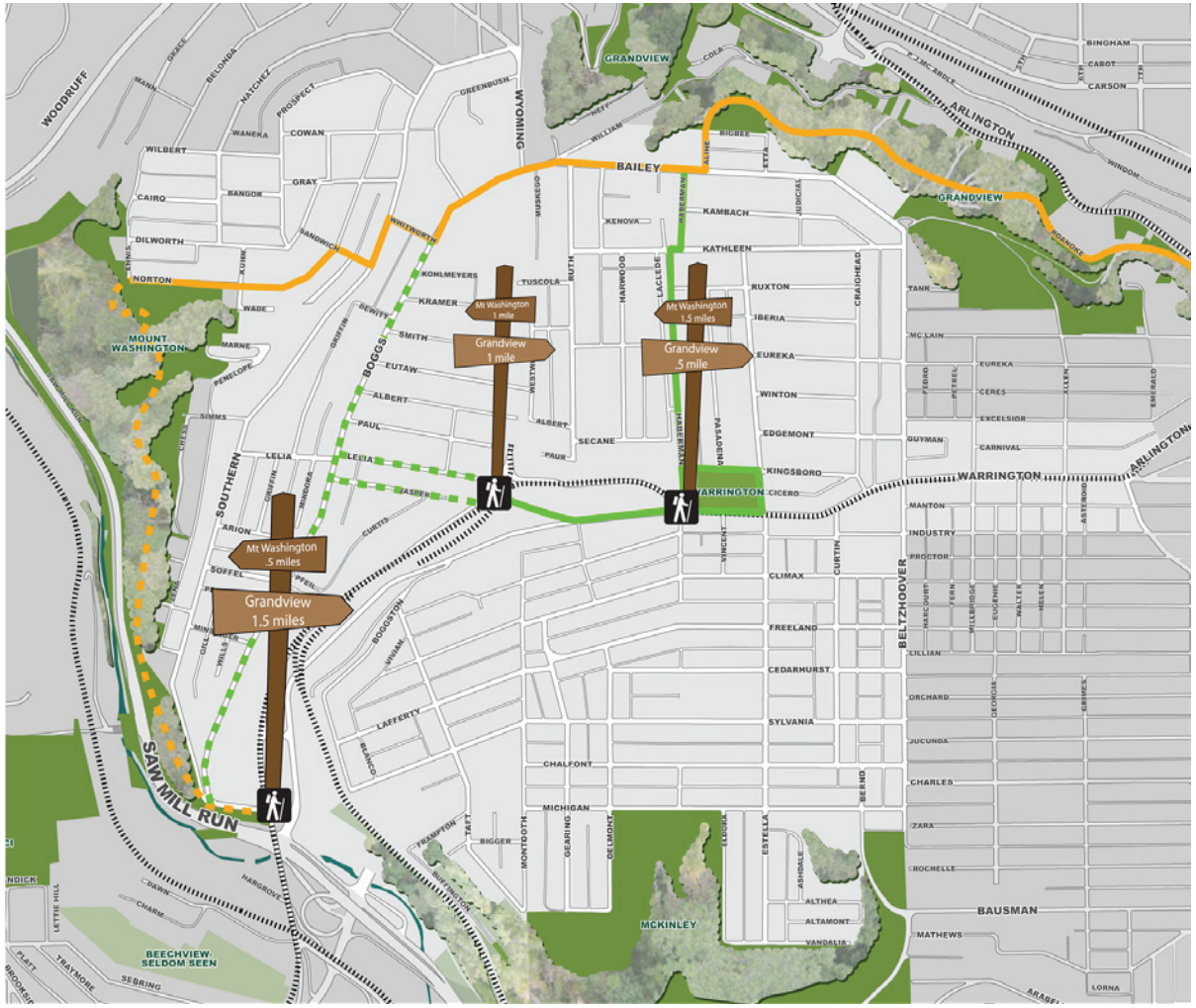


Figure 39. Sketch of Emerald View Park Trailhead Locations at the Junction and Secondary Connections to Trail System

INTRODUCE TRANSIT AMENITIES

The last set of recommendations focus on increasing station amenities and improving the transit infrastructure to make riding the T an easier and more attractive option for people who live, work, or worship in the area or who might choose to commute from South Hills Junction into Downtown to save on parking costs and time spent in traffic. These ideas investigate potential locations for a Kiss 'n Ride to allow passengers to be dropped off and picked up from the station more easily, a Park 'n Ride to provide secure, off-street parking nearer to the station, and real-time bus tracking information to remove the guesswork and waiting time involved in catching a trolley or bus.

2.11 Create a public access road through the Junction for a kiss 'n ride

One of the challenges that accompanies the Junction's location is that the station is difficult to access for people who want to be dropped off. There is not currently a safe, convenient location for passengers to be dropped-off or picked-up at the Junction. Since only buses and trolleys are permitted to approach the station via the roadway that leads from Haberman into the Junction, Warrington Avenue, with its fast traffic and often full on-street parking, presents the best existing option for drop off or pick up; passengers must still descend a flight of stairs and navigate through the Junction to reach the T stop.

As the Brown Line service has ceased at least for at present, consideration should be given to constructing a new roadway that runs from Warrington Avenue through the Junction along the existing rail tracks that previously served the Brown Line (see Figure 40). The new road would meet Warrington near Boggston Avenue and would be one-way heading northwest and terminating at Haberman Avenue.

To preserve and maintain the Brown Line infrastructure, the new road should be constructed as a shared right-of-way as found along Warrington Avenue where the T formerly shared the roadway with automobiles. This would allow Brown Line service to be re-instated in the future as well as permit the tracks to be used as necessary (although not during peak communing hours) for storage of trains, turnback operations, game day extra service, snow routings, maintenance, or detours during special events or construction. The existing sidewalk would remain for pedestrians.

If this option is not possible, an alternative solution is to allow public use of the current access road extending from Warrington at Haberman (see Figure 41). Improvements, including appropriate and visible signage, would be necessary to direct two-way public access to the station and proposed Park 'n Ride lot described in Recommendation 2.13. A full engineering study of both options would be necessary to ensure that Port Authority operations are not compromised.

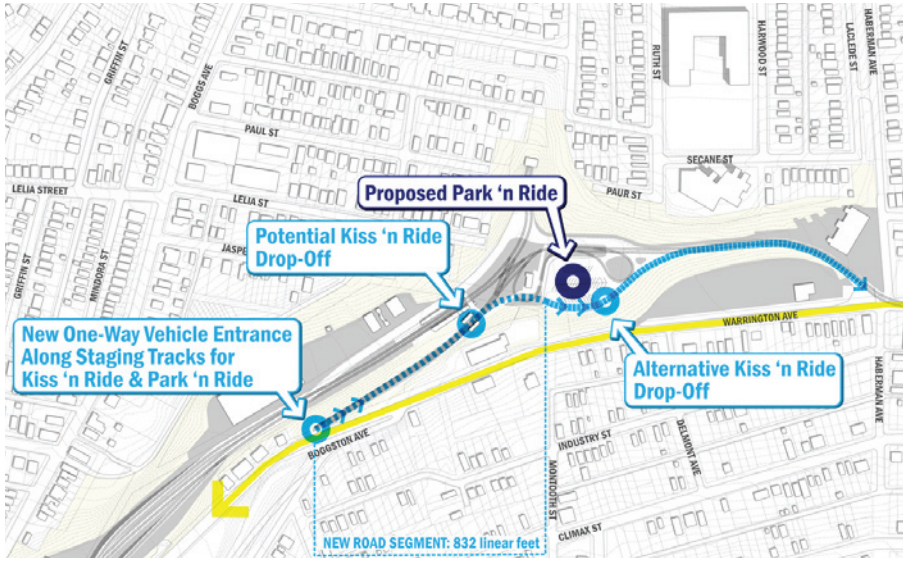


Figure 40. Proposed Kiss 'n Ride Route along Brown Line Track Alignment

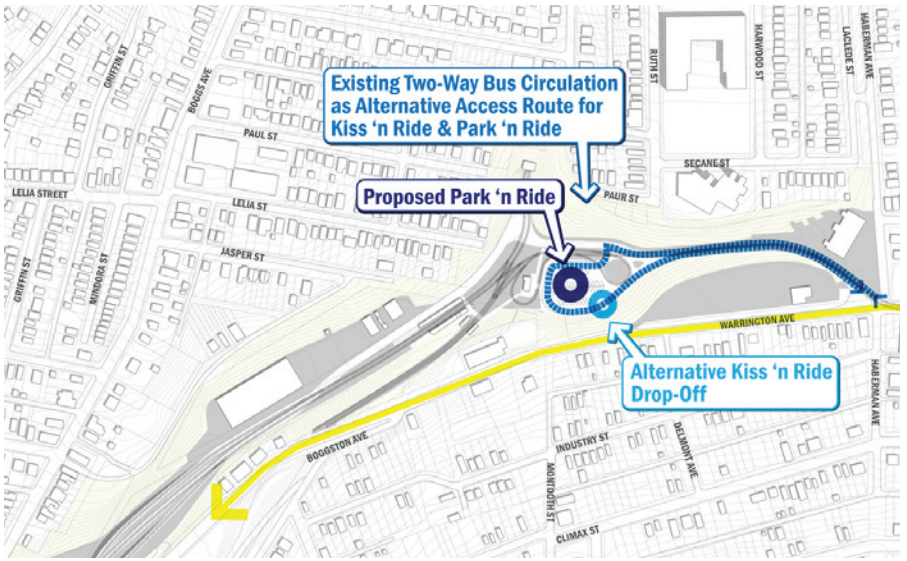


Figure 41. Alternative Kiss 'n Ride Route along Existing Bus Route

2.12 Investigate opportunities for a park 'n ride lot at South Hills Junction

There is currently no off-street parking provided for transit riders who want to drive to the station and take the T. Those that park and ride now leave their cars on the street for hours at a time, co-opting a resident resource and leaving their vehicle vulnerable to theft and break-ins during their lengthy stay. There is an existing 47-space surface parking lot to the northwest of the station that serves Port Authority employees and contractors. It is recommended that the Port Authority parking lot at the bus turn-around be re-located to an alternate location approved of by the Port Authority so that the parking area near the station can be used for a Park 'n Ride in the near term. Parking permits should be sold at prices competitive with the garage at Station Square to commuters who want to park in these spaces. Parking should be free on the weekends.

Port Authority parking lot that should be converted into a paid Park 'n Ride lot.

2.13 Install real-time information for busses and trains at the Junction

Wait times can be more costly in the minds of transit goers than the walk to the stop or the ride itself. Many cities across the United States have Global Position Systems (GPS) on their vehicles and have made this information available to the public. The Port Authority is currently investigating the feasibility of installing GPS on its vehicles. If the Port Authority installs GPS on vehicles and provides the information available to the public, it is recommended that this information be displayed in public, at the Junction, within area convenience stores, as well as online. Smart phone applications can also convey real-time transit information cost-effectively.

This bus tracker screen in a local business along one of Chicago's commercial corridors helps customers predict whether they have time to grab a coffee before catching the bus.

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

3 DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

The third set of recommendations focus on attracting new development and activity to South Hills Junction and transforming it into a new transit-oriented development site for Pittsburgh. To test the development potential of the South Hills Junction station area, the consultant team considered eligible sites close to the station deemed either vacant or underutilized and worked with the findings from the commercial and residential market study to determine how the proposed development program might fit into the site to transform South Hills Junction from an overlooked transit hub into a hub of transit-oriented activity.

The majority of the land that the development scenarios investigate is owned and occupied by the Port Authority of Allegheny County, including the one-acre site currently used for salt storage, the 1.7-acre site used for rail tie storage, and the existing parking area near the Junction. While open to discussions about facility relocation, the Port Authority emphasizes that any relocation of the salt and rail tie storage sites would need to be funded by non-Port Authority sources, but overseen by the Port Authority. Relocation is an eligible use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and should, therefore, be an eligible use of TRID dollars. However, the Port Authority presumably will benefit from the redevelopment, in terms of increased ridership. Since TRID dollars are not likely to be plentiful, additional sources will need to be secured for relocation of these facilities.

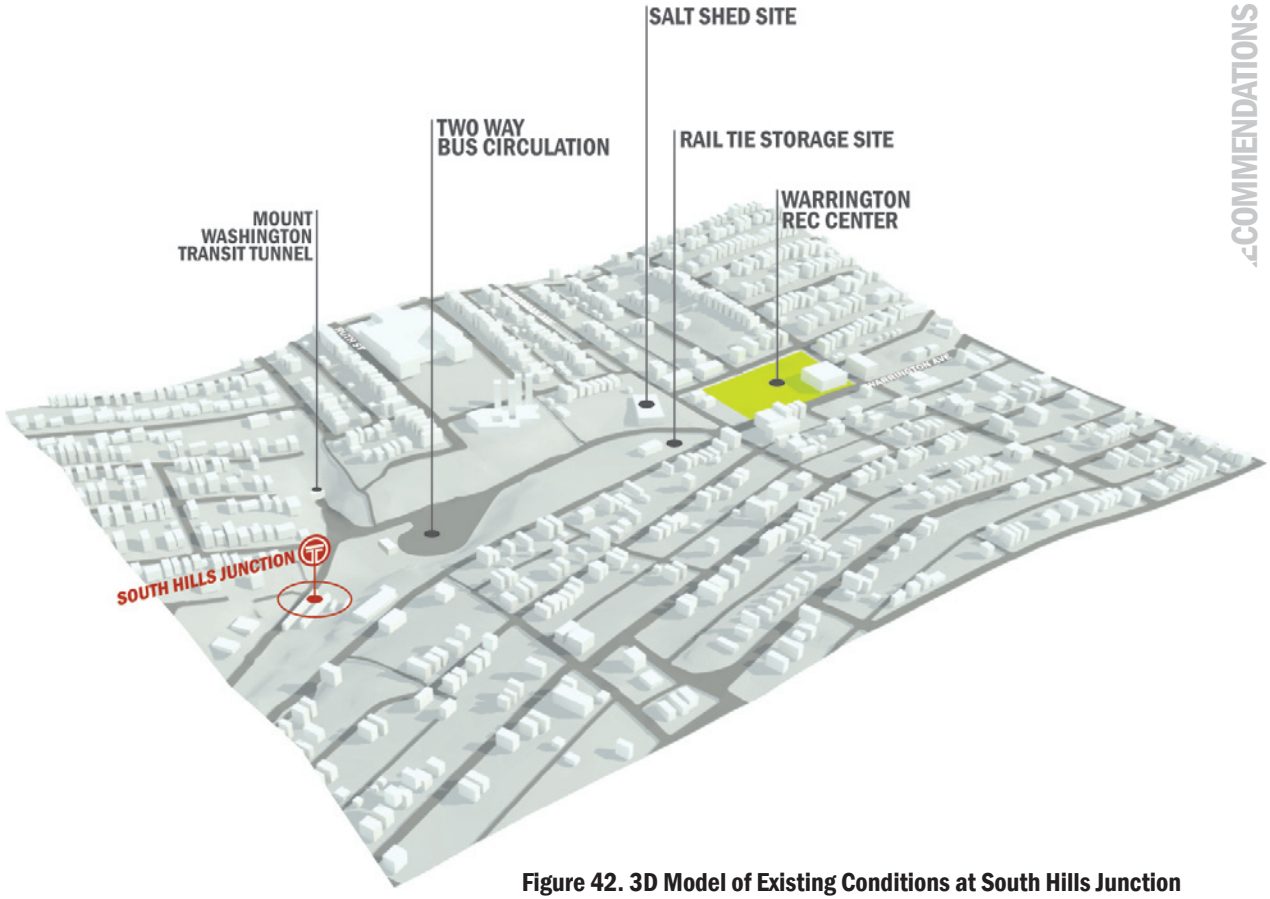


Figure 42. 3D Model of Existing Conditions at South Hills Junction

Furthermore, any sites identified for relocation should be able to provide the Port Authority with the same or better response effectiveness for the entirety of the light rail and busway systems as the existing locations. These sites are an integral part of the Port Authority Maintenance Operations, and their current proximity to the Maintenance Group is required.

As development at the station would need to be complemented by investment and stabilizing efforts in Mt. Washington and Beltzhoover to succeed, the development scenarios were also informed by the presence of vacant land and buildings, publicly-owned vacancy, and tax-delinquent land in the area.

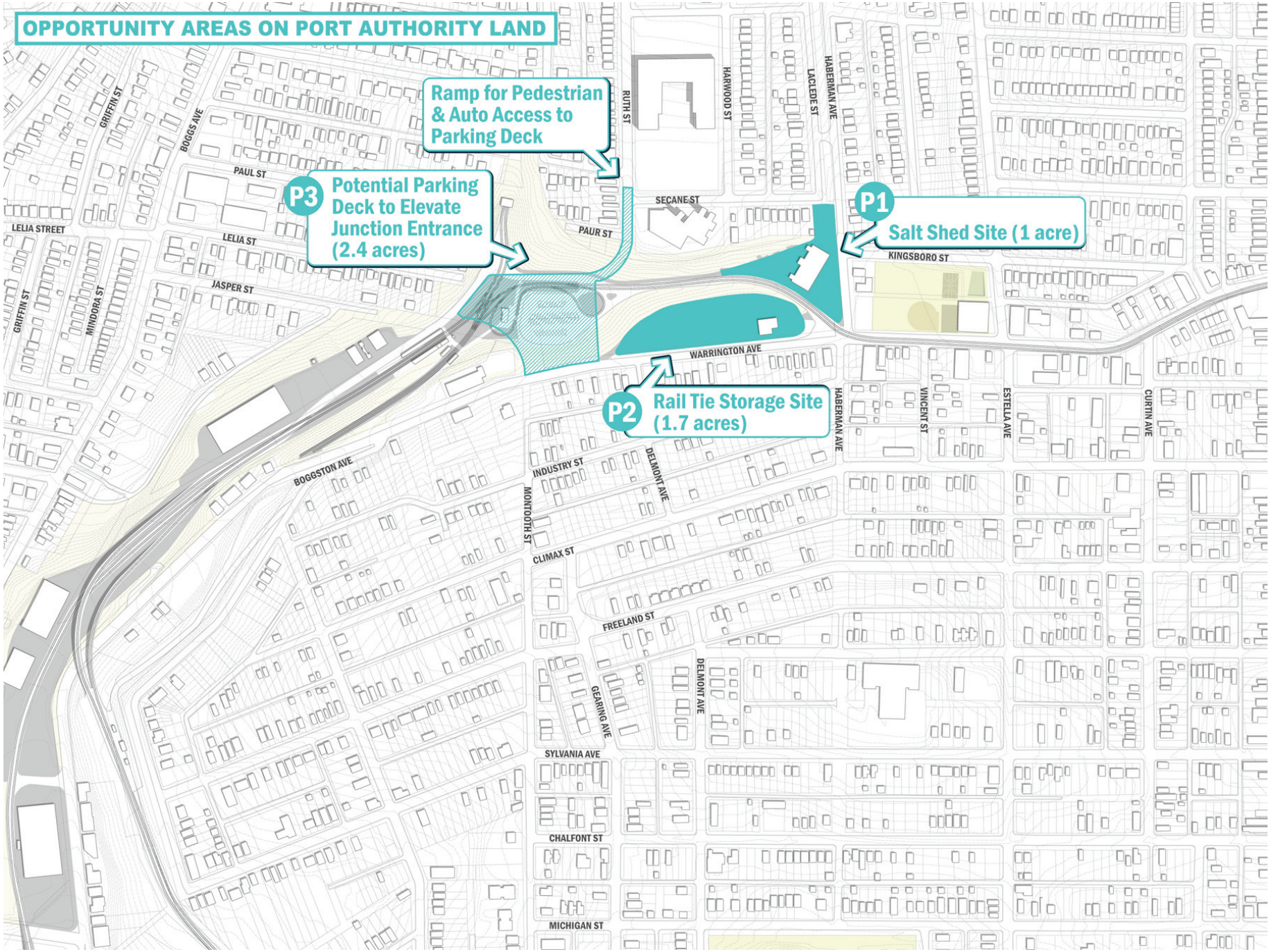


Figure 43. Port Authority-Owned Opportunity Sites at the Junction

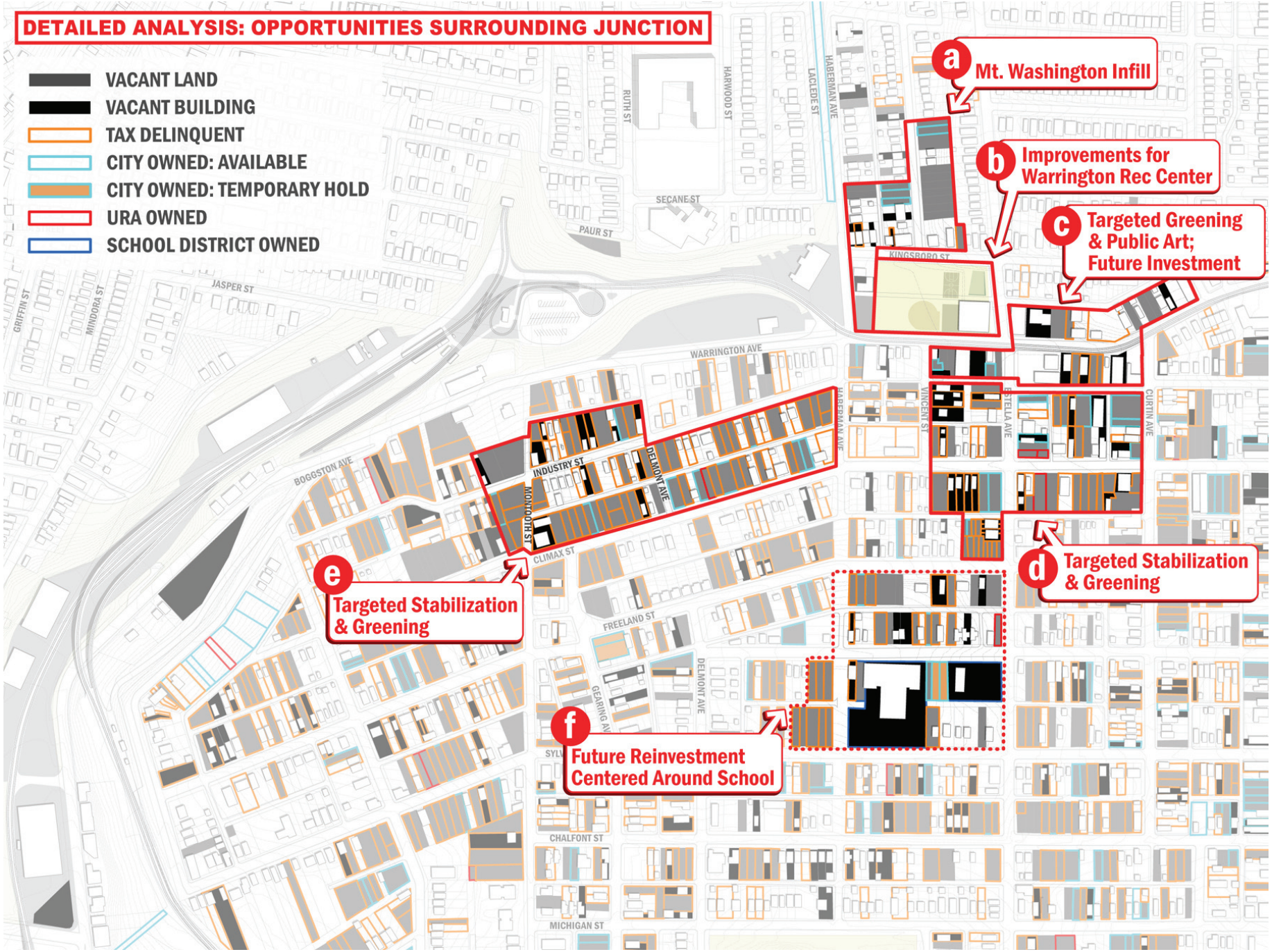


Figure 44. Supporting Opportunity Sites in Adjacent Communities

3.1 Integrate small vendors (like a coffee and newspaper kiosk) at the Junction

Long-term community residents remember a time, decades ago, when there was a small vendor located at South Hills Junction who sold candy, newspapers, and such to commuters and area residents. A diner, the Tunnel Restaurant, was also located just south of the Mt. Washington Tunnel portal.

The Tunnel Restaurant in 1970 is visible at left near the Mt. Washington Tunnel Portal.
Source: RRPictureArchives.net, C.W. Lahickey

While the market research is inconclusive as to the whether such small commercial amenities boost transit ridership, input from the community indicates a strong desire for some commercial conveniences at the Junction so that transit riders could purchase a cup of coffee or a newspaper while they wait for the T. A small temporary kiosk should be built at grade in the area proposed for the Park 'n Ride (Recommendation 2.13) and Kiss 'n Ride (Recommendation 2.12). If a larger development scheme (described in Recommendation 3.2) gains traction, a more permanent kiosk for a small vendor should be incorporated in the design, preferably at grade in the base of the proposed parking structure, where it could serve trolley and bus passengers, as well as people using the Kiss 'n Ride and Park 'n Ride. The coffee shop on the mezzanine level of the Steel Plaza station is a model for a similar vendor at South Hills Junction.

3.2 Seek to integrate development at South Hills Junction

According to the market study by Real Estate Strategies (RES), transforming South Hills Junction into a transit-oriented destination will require a highly visible new development. The development must be large enough and significant enough to attract people who otherwise would not come to the area. It must have sufficient "critical mass" to change the identity of the area while also giving people a reason to come to the South Hills Junction station area. Absent this type of initiative it will be extremely difficult – if not impossible – to re-brand the area.

As part of the *SMART TRID Study* RES explored a range of uses that might create a destination and help to establish a new identity at the Junction. Possibilities include a new sports facility (like a new practice facility for the Pittsburgh Penguins with associated activities), a large new indoor sports complex that might be built on top of a parking deck, a medical facility, and a campus for an educational institution. None of these uses appear to have sponsors interested in pursuing them.

Another alternative would be to create a mixed-use redevelopment with a retail component that is significant enough to be a destination and to "jump-start" other redevelopment activity in the area over time. Based on this approach, the following might be the components of such a mixed-use transit-oriented development:

- A large-scale or national retailer offering a mix of merchandise in a new store with up to 85,000 square feet, the maximum amount of space that will fit on a site at South Hills Junction
- Additional complementary retail stores to the extent they can be accommodated within a potentially expanded site footprint, including a full-size grocery and drug store
- Structured parking that will include "Park 'n Ride" spaces to serve South Hills Junction riders and to meet the parking requirements of retailers
- Mixed-income rental housing that can capitalize on a Mt. Washington location and front on Haberman and/or Kingsboro Streets
- An expansion of activities and services at Warrington Recreation Center – or, development of a new recreation center at a nearby location on Warrington Avenue
- Infill rental or sales housing development in the area bounded by Kingsboro, Estella, Eureka, and Haberman Streets, termed the Estella Micro-Neighborhood

- Creation of a greenway in Beltzhoover along the Haberman Street right-of-way to connect the South Hills station area with McKinley Park

- Development of new for-sale housing near McKinley Park in Beltzhoover when the neighborhood has stabilized and market conditions indicate support for new development

To test the development potential of the South Hills Junction station area, the team developed three conceptual scenarios, with Scenario 1 illustrating a lighter approach to development and Scenario 3 representing a larger-scale development. Scenario 2 offers a middle ground.

SCENARIO 1 – Scenario 1 (Figure 45) focuses on residential infill to stabilize the portion of Mt. Washington just north of Warrington Recreation Center and the creation of additional recreational resources to serve both Beltzhoover and Mt. Washington. In addition to an extended median as Haberman approaches Warrington Avenue from the north, greening along Haberman in Beltzhoover to link McKinley Park with Warrington Avenue, and a ramp from Ruth Street down into the Junction, this scenario includes:

a) A 47-space Park 'n Ride lot at the existing Port Authority parking lot
b) A new 27,000 square foot community, health, and recreation center plus 1.5 acres of additional play space on the current rail tie site
c) A spray ground and other improvements at Warrington Recreation Center
d) 50 residential units in two three-story multifamily buildings, one on each side of Haberman
e) 25 townhomes in the Estella Micro-Neighborhood
f) Targeted greening and vacant land stabilization in Beltzhoover between Montooth and Curtin, Industry and Climax

Assessment: While Scenario 1 offers new community space and recreation facilities, these will be difficult to pay for absent other significant investment. Because the development program is limited in this Scenario, much of the proposed program from housing to open space is still far from the transit station itself. Finally, the ability to "capture the value" of the development to pay for greening and other infrastructure improvements described above is limited. The only portion of this development program that provides a value to be captured locally is the housing development along Haberman. Understanding these realities, the team explored alternative development scenarios in line with the market study findings described above.

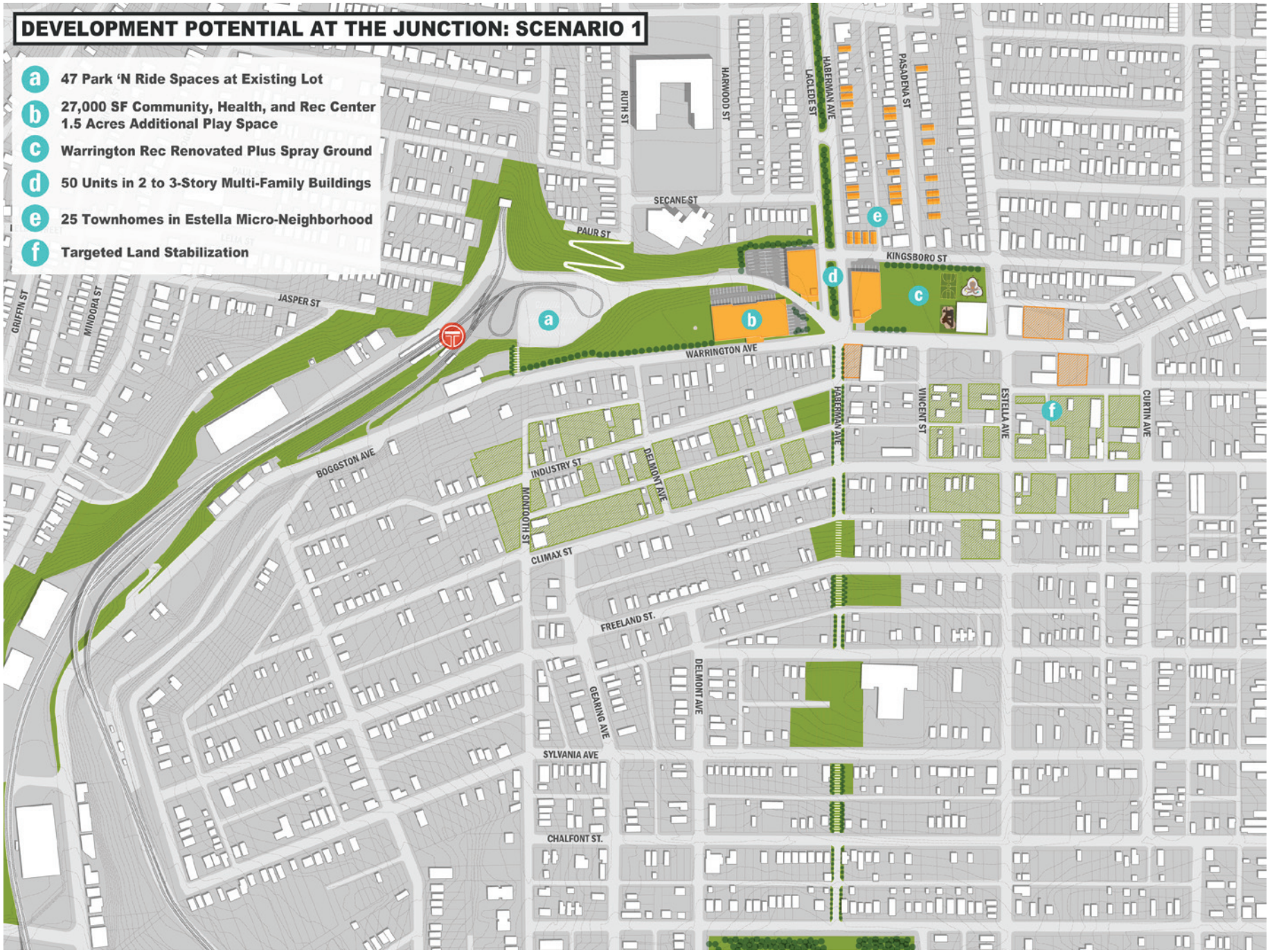


Figure 45. Development Scenario 1 Site Plan

The Port Authority's rail tie site (left, b) and salt storage shed (right, d) are the two sizable, flat sites which may present opportunities for redevelopment near South Hills Junction.

SCENARIO 2 – Scenario 2 (Figures 46 and 47) maintains the extended median as Haberman approaches Warrington Avenue from the north and the greening along Haberman in Beltzhoover to link McKinley Park with Warrington Avenue. The spray ground and improvements to Warrington Recreation Center are also consistent with Scenario 1. The pedestrian ramp in Scenario 1 from Ruth Street down into the Junction has been adapted as a pedestrian and auto bridge linking Ruth Street with the proposed parking structure (a) and retail opportunities (b).

a) A parking structure with 3 decks that creates 165 spaces and allows for ground floor bus circulation and a Kiss 'n Ride; built up from the floor of the sunken station, the top level of the parking deck appears to be an at-grade parking lot on Warrington Avenue. Elevators at the parking deck would also serve to take pedestrians entering at a plaza on Warrington down into the Junction.
b) 85,000 square feet of retail space for a single large-scale tenant or multiple smaller commercial tenants, including a grocery, supported by surface parking at Warrington and Haberman as well as the parking structure adjacent to the Junction
c) 14 1,200 square foot apartments in a three-story multi-family building
d) 27 1,000 square foot apartments in a three-story multi-family building
e) 25 townhomes in the Estella Micro-Neighborhood

Scenario 2 also highlights parcels for potential future commercial reinvestment along Warrington Avenue if the development at (b) creates a stronger market for smaller scale retail. Targeted greening and vacant land stabilization is again proposed in Beltzhoover between Montooth and Curtin, Industry and Climax.

Assessment: Scenario 2 provides enough development to effectively "capture value" and reinvest those dollars to support local infrastructure and public improvements. But while more money would potentially be available through a TRID according to this scenario, the costs are also higher to make the development feasible including, most notably, the parking deck over the Junction.

SCENARIO 3 – Scenario 3 (Figures 48 and 49) presents the most commercial programming of the three conceptual site plans. It retains many of the elements illustrated in Scenario 2, but adds the existing Warrington Recreation Center site as a potential development site to fit a grocery store with parking and housing above for a true, mixed-use transit-oriented development. From a market perspective, the advantages of considering the Warrington Recreation Center for redevelopment is two-fold: it enables more retail to be developed which will further provide the critical mass necessary to reinvent both the Junction and Warrington Avenue; it would also provide new development on one of the most visible sites in the study area.

From the community perspective, this scenario also provides benefits. The majority of Warrington Rec users are from Beltzhoover, and the Center itself is in dire need of improvements. A new community, recreation and health center (potentially run by a private or non-profit organization with capacity to undertake this type of development) would offer a home for much needed local services while providing a burst of new investment in the heart of the community it serves.

However, before this option could move forward, the City and elected officials would have to work with area community groups to select a new site in close proximity for the construction of a new community, health and recreation center as well as playing fields to replace the existing Rec Center with a new, modern, and more multi-purpose community center. Though Beltzhoover has many acres of vacant land and many parcels that are already publicly-owned or tax delinquent (Figure 44), none of the potential sites for a new recreation center could be redeveloped as such without some acquisition and relocation of existing residents. If this scenario is favored by the community and there is developer interest, implementation will require close coordination with the community. As presented to the community, this scenario should not preclude going ahead with the much needed spray ground at Warrington Rec. It will take years to locate, design, and build a new modern multi-purpose center all of which should happen prior to any redevelopment of the existing Warrington Rec site.

Scenario 3 maintains the extended median as Haberman approaches Warrington Avenue from the north and the greening along Haberman in Beltzhoover to link McKinley Park with Warrington Avenue. Sites (a), (b), and (c) remain the same as in Scenario 2, locating a parking structure, large-scale commercial retailer, and housing, respectively. Site (e) varies slightly, showing fewer homes to avoid front doors that look out on a parking deck above the grocery proposed for site (d). Site (f) locates blocks to be considered for construction of a new rec center and fields.

a) A parking structure with 3 decks that creates 165 spaces and allows for ground floor bus circulation and a Kiss 'n Ride; built up from the floor of the sunken station, the top level of the parking deck appears to be an at-grade parking lot on Warrington Avenue. Elevators at the parking deck would also serve to take pedestrians entering at a plaza on Warrington down into the Junction.
b) 85,000 square feet of retail space for a single large-scale tenant or multiple smaller commercial tenants supported by surface parking at Warrington and Haberman as well as the parking structure adjacent to the Junction
c) 14 1,200 square foot apartments in a three-story multi-family building
d) 42,000 square feet of retail on the ground floor for a grocery store with 66 parking spaces on the roof of the structure and 91 surface parking spaces in addition to 37 1,000 square foot apartments in a two-story multi-family building
e) 23 townhomes in the Estella Micro-Neighborhood

Scenario 3 also highlights parcels for potential future commercial reinvestment along Warrington Avenue if the development at (b) and (d) creates a stronger market for smaller scale retail as well. Targeted greening and vacant land stabilization is again proposed in Beltzhoover between Montooth and Curtin, Industry and Climax. Given the distribution of publicly-owned and tax delinquent land, the blocks between Vincent and Curtin, Industry and Climax (f) should be considered for a new Community Center to replace the existing Recreation Center. Ideally, access from Warrington could be created to link the new, set-back Center to the main thoroughfare.

Assessment: This scenario provides the greatest amount of new services for the surrounding communities and establishes a mixed-use footprint around the Junction in line with market realities. It will generate the greatest amount of value capture dollars to be reinvested locally. However, this scenario also incurs the greatest cost, and the relocation of Warrington Rec is a potentially controversial suggestion. It will be difficult to pay for a new community, health, and recreation center without a large sponsor or private donor, and there will likely be concerns from the community about the location of the new facility. However, should this scenario not gain any traction, Scenario 2 is a reasonable alternative that will still provide new activity and services at the Junction.

Residential Phasing

New residential units near South Hills Junction should be developed only after some other development has taken place so that there is good evidence the area is changing. At that point there should be market support for new rental housing units for general occupancy. Because of the age of the existing multifamily stock in the market area, new units will provide an attractive alternative.

Like the South Hills Retirement Community and new apartment complexes in Pittsburgh, a mixed-income rental property is recommended. Rents in the immediate area are low; developers will need Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) and other gap financing for new development projects to be feasible. However, there is a limit on the incomes of households who can occupy these units, and full-time students cannot live in LIHTC units. A component of market-rate units provides opportunities to lease to a broader range of households. For infill rental development RES recommends townhouse-style units including some three bedroom units.

RES recommends a program targeting specific Mt. Washington neighborhoods such as Estella that have housing stock in need of rehabilitation. While homeownership is strong in the neighborhood, investors have been buying homes with low prices, and foreclosures have been a problem. One possibility would be to work with one or more community development organizations and lending institutions to explore ways to use the FHA 203(k) program in ways that will encourage homeowners to purchase and rehabilitate homes, thereby conserving URA's own resources for home acquisition and rehabilitation. The advantage of this program is that it provides a single loan covering both the home purchase and rehabilitation to upgrade the home. The disadvantage is that only one lender in Pittsburgh is reported to be participating in the program because of the paperwork and risk involved. Another alternative might be to target areas near transit for URA's Housing Recovery Program for Developers as a way to offer rehabilitated homes in the neighborhood to prospective purchasers.

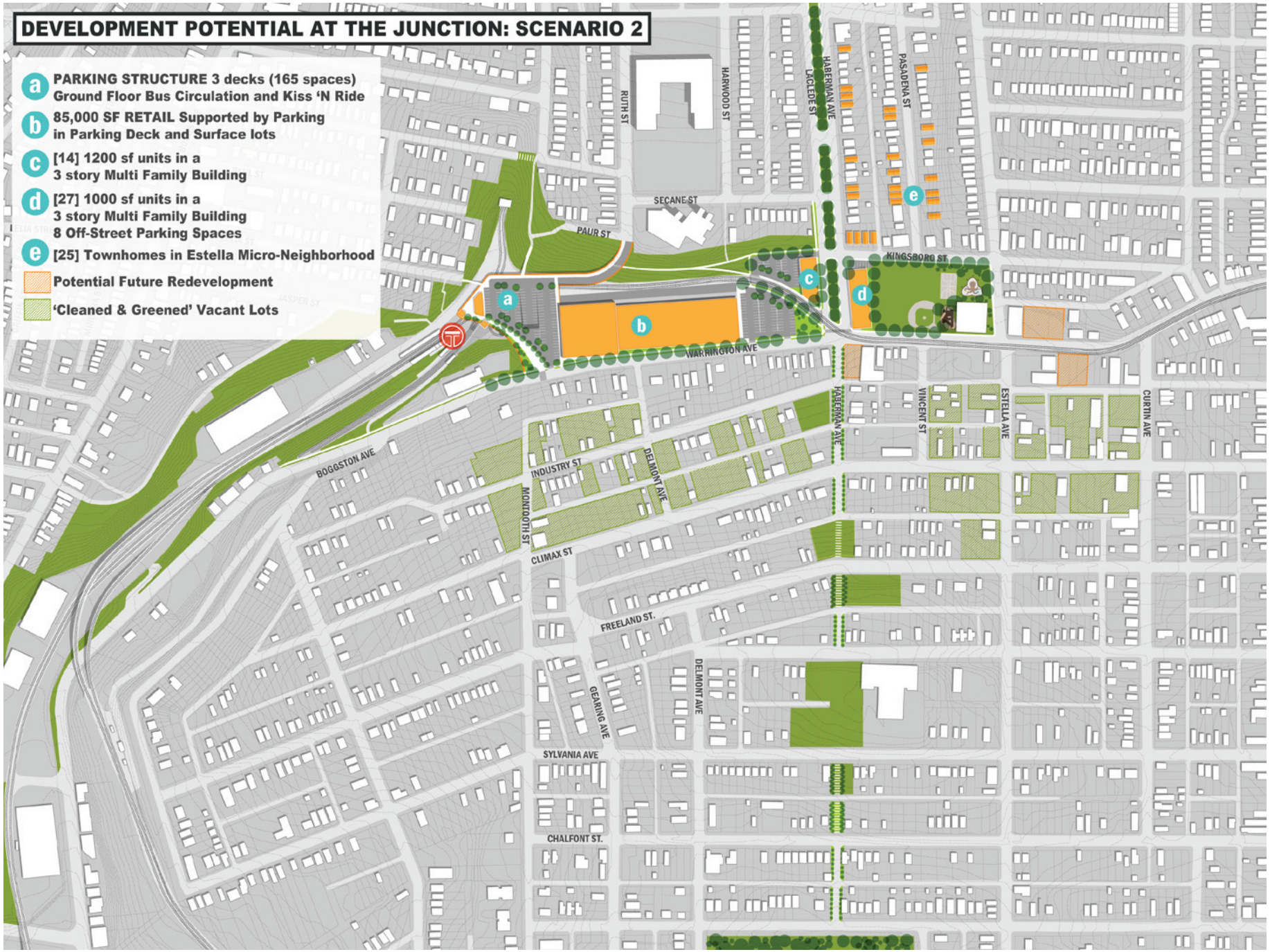


Figure 46. Development Scenario 2 Site Plan

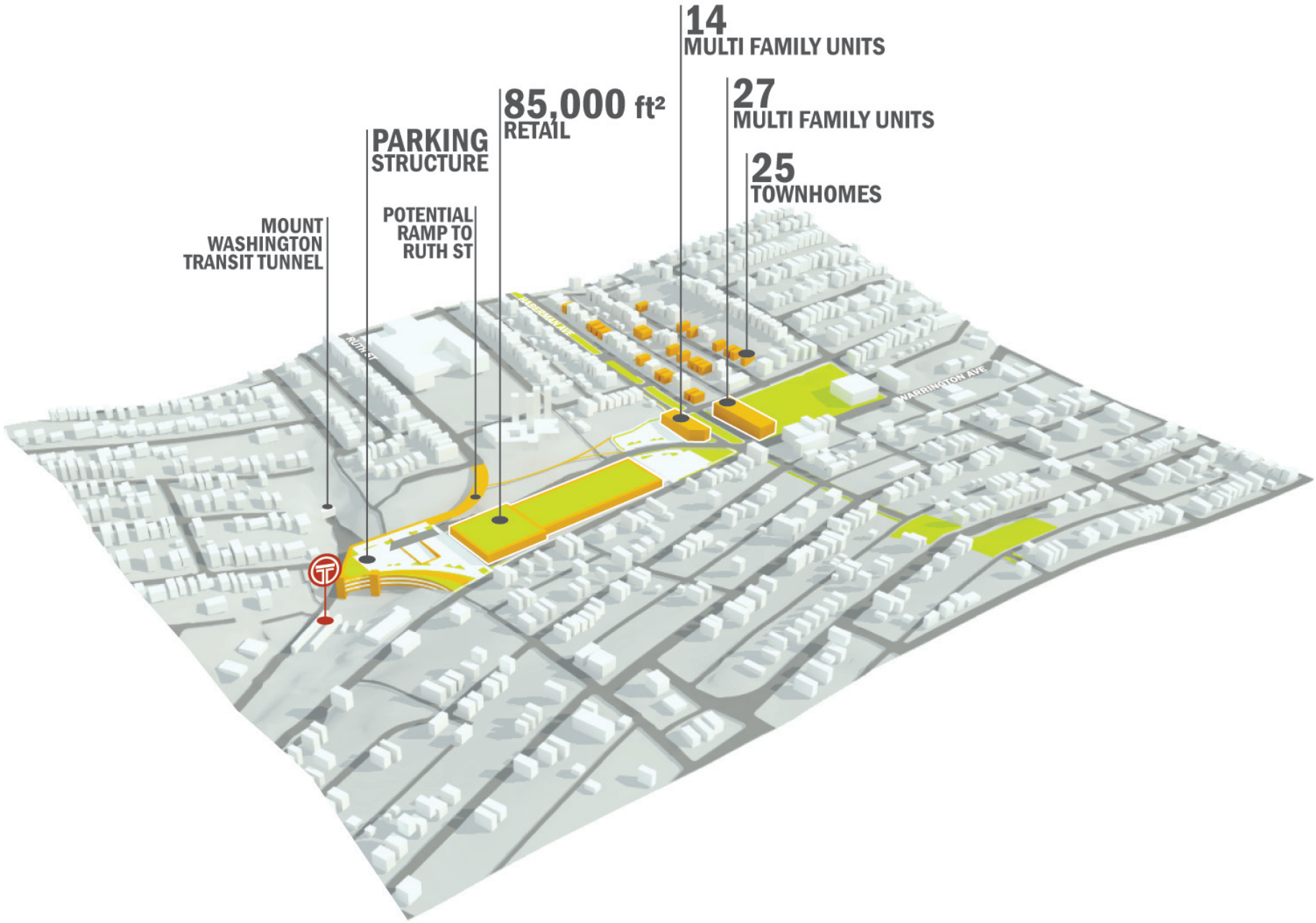


Figure 47. 3D Model of Development Scenario 2

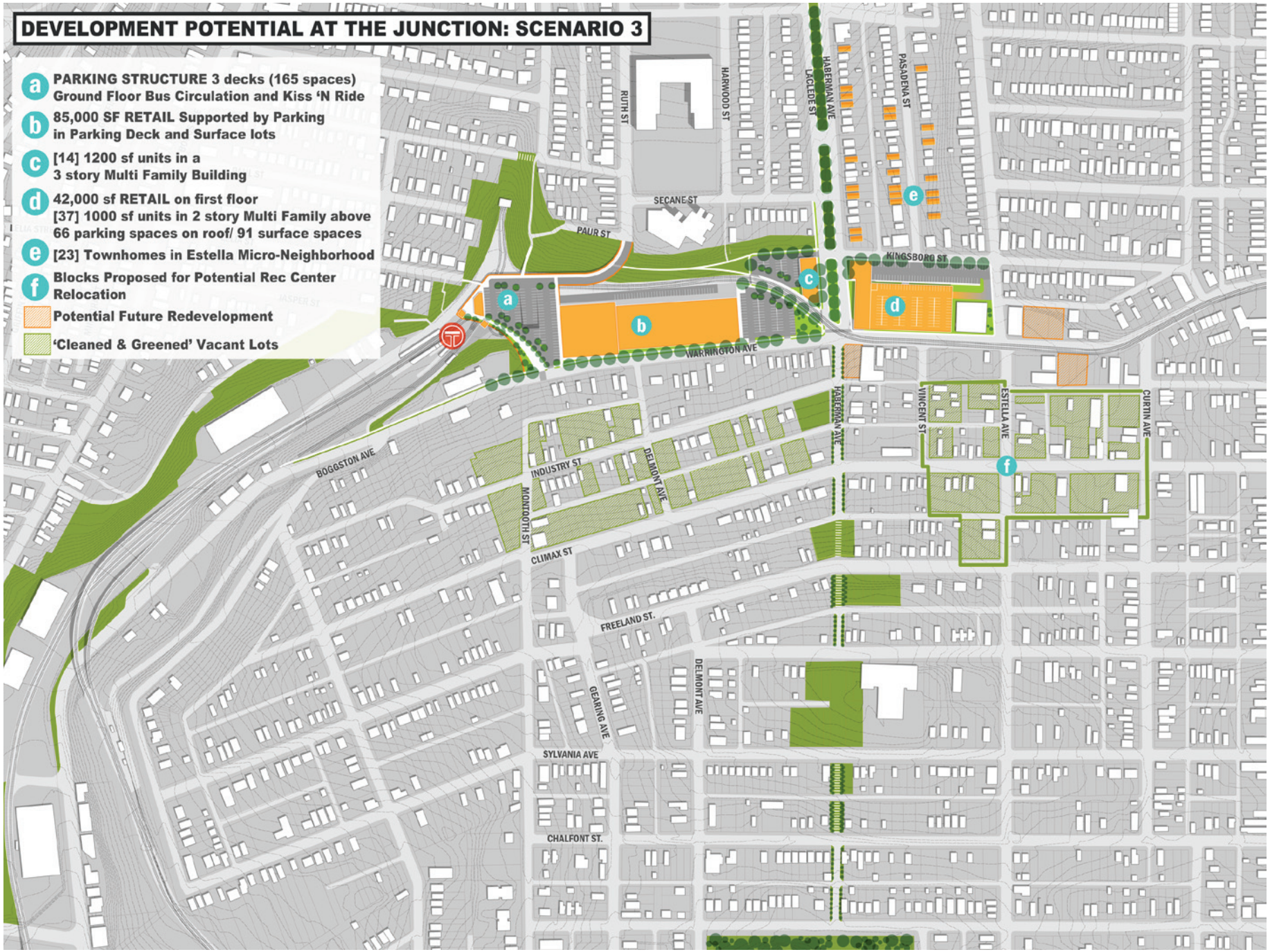


Figure 48. Development Scenario 3 Site Plan

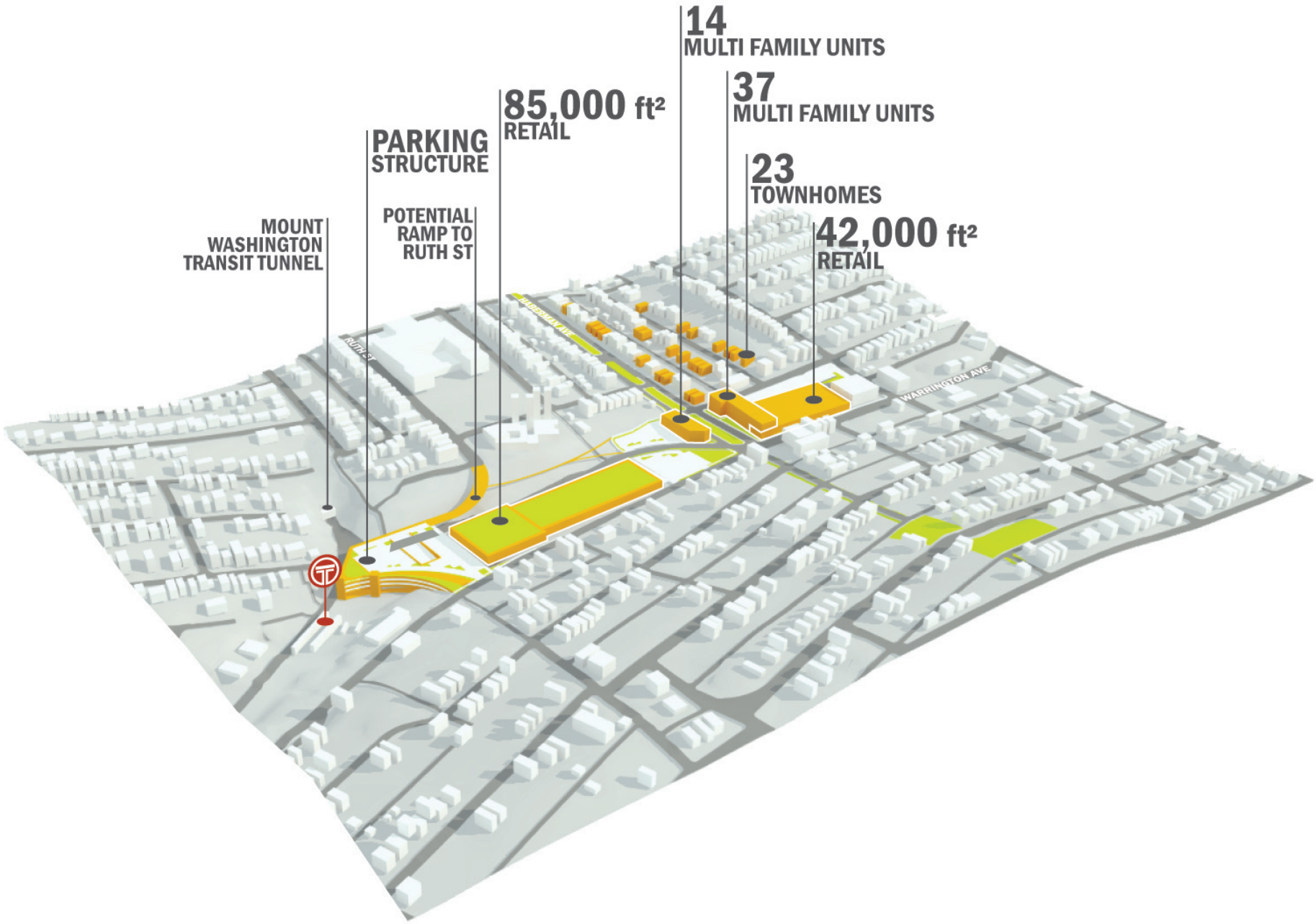


Figure 49. 3D Model of Development Scenario 3

3.3 Rename, rebrand, and add visual cues at the station to reflect new development at the Junction

Once a development scheme has been selected, the City, Port Authority, and developer should advertise the possibility of renaming South Hills Junction to rebrand the station and market the new development and shopping opportunities located in close proximity. The City and Port Authority should offer station naming rights as a carrot to attract commercial developers and tenants and advertisement space near the tracks as an income generator. Advertisements and public art visible from the windows of the T and clear navigational signage throughout the station will help passengers on the T register that they have arrived at the new Transit-Oriented Development, advertise the retail opportunities located above the station, and direct customers alighting from the T to the nearby shopping venues.

3.4 In the long-term, build upon improvements and new development at the Junction with new residential investment in Beltzhoover

In the long term, once investments at South Hills Junction have taken root and transformed the area and its image, the housing market in Beltzhoover may be strong enough to develop a 40 to 50 unit homeownership development clustered near McKinley Park near Delmont and Montooth to build upon an existing strong pocket of residential in the neighborhood. As Years 18 to 20 in the TRID agreement approach, a market study should be conducted to determine whether there is a market for such a development.

For more details about the proposed commercial and residential development programs, see Real Estate Strategies' full market analysis, included as an Appendix to the plan.

A new name would signal major change at the Junction.

McKinley Park and pockets of stable housing nearby are assets to reinforce and build upon in Beltzhoover.

Web of tracks at South Hills Junction

V IMPLEMENTATION

VALUE CAPTURE OVERVIEW

As federal and state economic development resources become scarce, value capture strategies have become a critical part of the funding mix for complex urban development projects. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a value capture method of funding or financing project costs (typically those elements with some public benefit, such as infrastructure) based on a stream of future net new tax revenues associated with a real estate development project. Generally real estate taxes are designated for TIF capture; however, other taxes, such as earned income tax and local sales tax can also be included in the TIF structure. The TIF process is at the root of the TRID concept. In looking at a prospective TRID, it is helpful to understand the details of TIF as it has been implemented in Pittsburgh.

TIF is authorized by state legislation[8] which restricts the use of this tool to projects in areas certified as blighted. (TRID is not restricted to blighted areas.) To date, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) has been the implementing entity and conduit for TIF financings in the City of Pittsburgh. As a policy, the URA directs TIF proceeds to public infrastructure rather than developer subsidy or other uses.

A TIF agreement defines the following:

- The geographic boundaries of the TIF district—typically a single project site, but can be a larger area
- The taxing jurisdictions (municipal, School District, County) and tax types (real estate, earned income, sales) to be included in the TIF as well as the participation rate for each jurisdiction
- The base year (before the impact of the project). Revenue from the specified taxes generated over the base year tax yield are diverted from general government purposes and deposited in a TIF fund, according to the participation rates agreed to by the taxing jurisdictions
- The term of the TIF (limited to a 20 year maximum)

8 PA General Assembly, Tax Increment Financing Act (1990)

To date, most TIFs in Pittsburgh have been limited to a single project location. First Avenue Station, constructed with TIF funds yielded by the development of PNC Firstside Center, is a good example of a successful, single project TIF. TRID expands the value capture geography to reflect the potential overall increase in property values associated with proximity to both transit and new transit-oriented development (TOD). In addition to expanding the scale of the potential increment that can be captured, the district approach expands the area within which the value capture proceeds can be utilized. The ability to use TRID funds on improvements that extend beyond a single project site opens additional options for community revitalization activities.

As the TRID enabling legislation anticipated, TRID proceeds alone will not be adequate to fund major transit-oriented development projects and should be used to leverage investment from a range of public and private sources. A draft review of TRID planning studies[9] completed to date in the Commonwealth confirms the fact that the TRID funds are typically only a small portion of the overall investment planned for a district. It is anticipated that financial resources from many sources will be layered in order to implement and maintain TRID projects. Beyond the TRID management entity, a wide range of organizations have a role in TRID implementation including:

- The Commonwealth, in addition to enabling value capture, puts forth additional financial resources, particularly for gap financing
- The City has responsibility over ongoing streetscape, maintenance, policing, and other services
- Other overlay jurisdictions, such as special service districts or business improvement districts, may add their own streetscape, maintenance, policing, and other services on top of the City's functions
- Neighborhood groups, such as community development corporations or business associations, may provide services such as landscaping, greening, and safety initiatives
- The private developer invests his or her own equity, as well as soliciting investments, loans, and/or grants from other sources
- The Port Authority budgets ongoing dollars for station maintenance and capital improvements[10]

TRID value capture funds should not replace any outlays that would otherwise be made by the Port Authority, the City, other overlay jurisdictions, or neighborhood groups. Instead the tax increment offers an opportunity to leverage additional investment by supporting initiatives that improve the overall climate for TOD development in the TRID. The projected tax increment generated can be used to pay debt service on a bond issue or other financing or can be utilized for "pay as you go" projects such as marketing of businesses and other developments in the TRID, signage banners and wayfinding improvements, and development and maintenance of non-transit infrastructure such as sidewalks, streets, bike facilities, and street furniture over the lifespan of the TRID. Realistically, a combination of the two approaches will allow development of a front-end catalyst project as well as a flow of funds to support smaller scale improvements and management of the TRID over time.

9 "Transit Revitalization Investment Districts: Challenges and Opportunities draft report", April 2011, prepared for the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development ("PCRG report")

10 Conceptual framework for roles outlined in "Implementing Transit Revitalization Investment Districts in Philadelphia", October 2008, prepared for Neighborhoods Now by Econsult

SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION TRID TAX INCREMENT ESTIMATES

For each development scenario presented in this Study RES prepared estimates of the real estate tax and earned income tax increments associated with the initial development program. The development programs presented are phased to take place in the first five or six years of a 20-year TRID term. Ideally this early investment will trigger additional development as well as an overall increase in market value for properties within the TRID boundaries.

The assumptions used in the RES model and the resulting tax increment estimates presented in this section are purposely conservative. Additional development beyond the proposed program would result in higher tax increments and increased financing capacity. Real Estate Strategies' Appendix includes more detail on the 20 year flow of tax increment funds.

Real Estate Tax Increment: TRID Development Program

It is assumed that the projected real estate tax increment associated with the identified development program will be used to pay debt service on a bond or loan to support early up- front investment in the TRID. An estimate of potential bond proceeds, as well as the present value of the tax increment projected to remain after debt service (available for pay-as-you-go projects), is provided.

- It is assumed that the full increment from City and County taxes flows to the TRID district. This 100% participation is based on informal guidance from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), which indicates that the intent of the TRID enabling legislation is for the full increment generated to be diverted to the TRID. It is unclear if this intent pertains to the School District increment. Therefore, two estimates were prepared: one for 100% School District participation and a second estimate assuming 50% School District participation.

- It is assumed that Year 1 of the TRID is 2014.

- The incremental assessed valuation attributable to taxable improvements in the development program was estimated based on the assessments of comparable properties both in and outside of the TRID, discussions with representatives at the County Office of Property Assessments (OPA) and URA, and a review of a previous analysis of the relationship between market value and building assessed valuation conducted by ERA as part of that firm's TRID/TIF analysis for East Liberty.[11]

  - **Townhouses:** approximately $120,600/unit
  - **Multifamily apartments:** approximately $51,700 for new units and $38,800 for rehabilitated units.
  - **Retail:** $65/square foot for renovated space, $80/square foot for new construction

  The increment is based on projected incremental increases in the building portion of the assessment only. Land assessments were not modified. In cases where a currently tax-exempt parcel is brought back on the tax rolls, additional tax revenues will be generated beyond the levels reflected in these estimates.

11 "Eastside TOD TRID/TIF Analysis," April 2008, prepared for URA by Economics Research Associates (ERA)

- For the purposes of this analysis, once an element of the development program comes on line, its assessment is held constant over the remaining TRID time frame. Current real estate tax rates are used: 10.8 mills for the City of Pittsburgh, 13.92 mills for the School District, and 4.69 mills for Allegheny County. Tax rates are inflated one percent annually during the term of the TRID.

- Though bond interest rates are usually much lower, the model assumes a rate of eight percent to include costs of issuance, administrative costs, and to remain conservative.

- A debt coverage ratio of 150 percent was used. This assumes that the bond issue or financing is sized based on two thirds of the available increment. The remaining third is "coverage"—a cushion to ensure that the anticipated cash flows will be adequate to pay debt service. If the increment is produced as expected, any funds beyond what is used to pay debt service will be deposited in the TRID fund and be available for additional expenditures in the TRID.

- The increment that is projected to remain after debt service is discounted to 2011 dollars, using a three percent deflator.

- We assume that commercial, multifamily residential, and mixed-use properties within the TRID will not be eligible for a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Act (LERTA) tax abatement.[12] For homeownership properties, the standard Pittsburgh Act 42 three-year residential abatement[13] is included in the model.

12 Commercial or mixed-use property owners undertaking new construction or rehabilitation of an existing property may apply for a five-year LERTA abatement of the incremental City taxes up to an annual maximum of $50,000. TIF enabling legislation prohibits the award of LERTA abatements to properties within a TIF district. Because the increment generated within a TRID is directed to improvements that benefit property owners, it would be reasonable to place the same restriction in the TRID Agreement.

13 Act 42 Residential Abatement (Pittsburgh Code Chapter 265) offers an assessment reduction of 100 percent of increase associated with improvements up to $86,750 for new residential construction and $36,900 for renovations. Multifamily apartments are not eligible.

View into the Junction

Background Growth in Assessed Value

In addition to the project-specific tax revenues associated with the development program, there is likely to be "background" growth in the market value of existing properties over the timeframe of the TRID. In theory, the increment generated from a parallel growth in assessed valuation should be captured and reinvested in the TRID. However, Allegheny County uses a base year method for property assessment. In the years between County-wide revaluations, assessments are revised infrequently, and only when new improvements are constructed, a building permit is pulled for renovations, a property owner applies for a tax abatement, or the School District appeals an individual property assessment.

The last revaluation of all property in the County took place in 2005 based on 2002 base year values. The time that has elapsed between revaluations has led to complaints of inequity in assessed values. The County is under Pennsylvania Supreme Court order to conduct a new revaluation, which is under way. New assessed values will be introduced in 2012, with a new base year of 2010. Although the Court has opined that the base year method of assessment is unacceptable, it is unclear how the County will modify its assessment approach moving forward. The County has recently petitioned the Court to halt the reassessment and to set standards for when counties need to reassess properties.

Because the ability to realize the benefits of this background growth is uncertain for the South Hills Junction TRID, an estimate is provided separately and not aggregated with the increment associated with the proposed development program. The estimate is conservative and is based on the following assumptions:

- The current aggregate assessed value within the proposed South Hills Junction TRID boundaries is approximately $68 million. At current tax rates (29.4 mills total), this assessment base results in a combined tax yield for the City, County, and School District of just over $2.0 million annually (2011 dollars).
- No background growth occurs in Years 1 through 5.
- In Years 6 through 20, as the impact of implementation of the development program is realized, the overall assessment in the TRID is projected to grow by 0.25 percent annually.

The City of Philadelphia (which is coterminous with Philadelphia County) has rolling assessments. As a result, increases in the overall market value of real estate in a TRID can be captured in "real time". A planning study conducted for two proposed Philadelphia TRIDs notes that the increment from background appreciation in the TRID can offset the loss of increment from tax abatements.[14] Without the background increment, Philadelphia's 10-year tax abatements for new construction and renovations would severely limit the value capture until after Year 10 of the TRID term. Without the ability to regularly capture an increment from background appreciation in the South Hills Junction TRID, it is necessary to restrict commercial abatements (LERTA) in the TRID to maximize the increment captured.

14 Econsult, 38

Earned Income Tax Increment

Because two of the South Hills Junction development scenarios include a significant commercial component, a separate estimate of the tax increment associated with new earned income tax payments by workers in the TRID is provided. The City of Pittsburgh imposes a one percent earned income tax; the School District imposes a two percent earned income tax. The estimates were developed based on the following assumptions:

- FTE (full time equivalent) job counts were estimated based on 400 square feet per employee.
- An average annual wage per FTE was estimated using the most recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupation Employment Statistics series. The wage assumption used is the average of the "retail salesperson" and "cashier" wage categories for Allegheny County: $21,150.
- The estimate assumes that both the City and the School District divert a one percent earned income tax increment to the TRID (it is assumed that the School District also retains one percent).

Preliminary estimates of the total 20-year tax increments projected for each South Hills Junction TRID development scenario are provided below. Each estimate is presented in 2011 dollars. These amounts represent preliminary, conservative estimates. The actual value captured will be determined by the specific design of the improvements, the actual assessed valuations and tax rates in effect during the TRID, and the timing of individual components of the development program.

SCENARIO #1

The development phasing modeled for Scenario #1 assumes that 25 in-fill townhouses come on line in Years 1 and 2 of the TRID and 50 multi-family rental units are constructed and occupied in Years 4 and 5. There is no commercial development component in this scenario. Homeownership units are anticipated for construction late in the TRID term and are expected to be subject to the Act 42 abatement until the end of the term.

SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION: Scenario #1

20-Year Increment by Type (2011 dollars)	School District Participation 50%	100%
Real Estate Tax		
Total Increment from Development Program (a)	$1,679,556	$2,257,213
Estimated Bond/Loan Proceeds	$620,183	$844,164
Remaining Increment	$559,852	$752,404
Increment from "Background" Growth (b)	$464,763	$607,291
Earned Income Tax		
Earned Income Tax from Development Program	$0	(c)

RES

(a) Sub-totals (bond/loan proceeds and remaining increment) will not add to total increment. Difference is interest and issuance costs for bond/loan.

(b) This increment will be difficult to realize under the current property assessment system, because revaluations are too infrequent to capture changes in market value as it occurs.

(c) Not modeled

Figure 50. Projected Tax Increment for Development Scenario 1

SCENARIO #2

The development scenario modeled in Scenario #2 assumes that 23 infill townhouses come on line in Years 1 and 2 of the TRID. The 85,000 square foot retail component is assumed to open in Year 3. Fifty-one multi-family rental units are added in Years 4 and 5. Homeownership units are anticipated for construction late in the TRID term and are expected to be subject to the Act 42 abatement until the end of the term.

SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION: Scenario #2

20-Year Increment by Type (2011 dollars)	School District Participation 50%	100%
Real Estate Tax		
Total Increment from Development Program (a)	$3,972,126	$4,982,880
Estimated Bond/Loan Proceeds	$1,508,077	$2,004,857
Remaining Increment	$1,324,042	$1,752,003
Increment from "Background" Growth (b)	$464,763	$607,291
Earned Income Tax		
Earned Income Tax from Development Program	$1,621,782	(c)

RES

(a) Sub-totals (bond/loan proceeds and remaining increment) will not add to total increment. Difference is interest and issuance costs for bond/loan.

(b) This increment will be difficult to realize under the current property assessment system, because revaluations are too infrequent to capture changes in market value as it occurs.

(c) Not modeled

Figure 51. Projected Tax Increment for Development Scenario 2

SCENARIO #3

The development scenario modeled in Scenario #3 assumes that 23 infill townhouses come on line in Years 1 and 2 of the TRID. The 85,000 square foot retail component is assumed to open in Year 3. A mixed-use development including an additional 42,000 square feet of retail space and 37 rental apartments opens in Year 5. An additional 14 multi-family rental units are added in Year 6. Homeownership units are anticipated for construction late in the TRID term and are expected to be subject to the Act 42 abatement until the end of the term.

SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION: Scenario #3

20-Year Increment by Type (2011 dollars)	School District Participation 50%	100%
Real Estate Tax		
Total Increment from Development Program (a)	$5,118,910	$6,758,322
Estimated Bond/Loan Proceeds	$2,196,989	$2,911,609
Remaining Increment	$1,706,303	$2,252,774
Increment from "Background" Growth (b)	$464,763	$607,291
Earned Income Tax		
Earned Income Tax from Development Program	$2,332,422	(c)

RES

(a) Sub-totals (bond/loan proceeds and remaining increment) will not add to total increment. Difference is interest and issuance costs for bond/loan.

(b) This increment will be difficult to realize under the current property assessment system, because revaluations are too infrequent to capture changes in market value as it occurs.

(c) Not modeled

Figure 52. Projected Tax Increment for Development Scenario 3

Fall foliage in Mt. Washington

Implications of the Tax Increment Analysis

The tax increment calculations raise several important issues with implications for the structure of a TRID. First, the potential earned income tax increment in the two scenarios with commercial components is significant. In the 50 percent School District participation estimates modeled above, the earned income tax increment totals 41 percent (Scenario #2) and 46 percent (Scenario #3) of the real estate tax increment. The addition of this tax to the overall value capture would increase the funds available for both debt service and pay-as-you-go expenditures throughout the TRID term.

Second, although conservative estimates of the potential increment from background growth of market values in the TRID are provided, it should be emphasized that the opportunities to capture this growth in a predictable way are severely limited without a system of rolling assessments. Unless Allegheny County transitions to a rolling assessment approach or designs another method for capturing changes in real estate market value in "real time," this portion of the estimated tax increment should not be counted as a source of funding for projects in the TRID. It is likely that an increment will be generated when the County does undertake a revaluation during the TRID term, however it is impossible to model the timing or magnitude of the increment.

Finally, planning studies for several other TRIDs proposed in the Commonwealth[15] have recommended excluding certain key parcels located within the TRID boundaries from the initial round of value capture. Because the TRID enabling legislation is unclear about the trigger for the 20-year value capture period, these studies have assumed that once these parcels are developed at a later date, they can then be added to the TRID, which will then enjoy a full 20 years of value capture from these parcels. This approach is not used in the increment analyses presented above. If DCED supports the concept of "resetting the clock" for specific parcels, it may be appropriate to do so for the Warrington Rec site, in order to maximize value capture, if this site is redeveloped later in the course of the initial 20-year TRID time frame.

15 Marcus Hook and Dormont/Mt. Lebanon

PRINCIPLES OF THE TRID AGREEMENT

A sample South Hills Junction TRID agreement template is included in Real Estate Strategies' Appendix. As TRID implementation proceeds, this document would be refined with additional detail as well as input from legal professionals. The sample TRID agreement addresses the following principles:

Mural in Mt. Washington

- URA will serve as the financing and implementing agency for the TRID.

- The TRID management entity will be constituted as a non-profit corporation ("South Hill Junction TRID, Inc."). The Board of South Hills Junction TRID, Inc. will provide oversight, guide the expenditure of the tax increment, and be responsible for complying with monitoring and reporting requirements. The Board should consist of one representative from each taxing authority (City of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh School District, and Allegheny County), a Port Authority representative, a URA representative, and two or four (to maintain an overall odd number of Board members) representatives of the neighborhood—representing CDCs and business associations active in the TRID area.

- For preliminary discussion purposes, it is assumed that the Agreement reflects 100 percent participation by the City and County and 50 percent participation by the School District.

- The agreement includes only the tax increment associated with the real estate tax. The sample agreement could be modified to included revenues from the municipal and School District earned income tax.

- The tax increment will be calculated based on increased assessments over the base year assessed valuation for all **taxable** parcels located within the TRID boundary. Any increment generated on the base year assessed value as a result of a tax rate increase will revert to the taxing authority. All tax increments associated with increased assessments over the base year assessed value will flow to the TRID. All tax increments associated with exempt properties returning to the tax rolls will flow to the TRID.

- No commercial LERTA will be awarded within the TRID boundary over the term of the TRID.

- Any tax increment retained by the TRID or proceeds of the TRID financing will be used for public infrastructure, transit facility improvement or other community revitalization activities within the TRID boundaries.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The Transit Revitalization Investment District Study outlines a series of strategies to make transit-oriented development meaningful and achievable at South Hills Junction. But while the plan is targeted toward the Junction, many of the issues identified here are shared by communities throughout the Southwestern Pennsylvania region.

Addressing the barriers to transit oriented development in Pittsburgh will require continued and expanded political support and coordination, particularly at South Hills Junction, which is also the "junction" of three council districts (Districts 2, 3, and 4). A consortium of elected officials and public and private stakeholders must continue to raise awareness of the benefits of TOD and encourage investment in infrastructure that will support development. But while development is a critical ingredient in bringing more activity around transit, each station exhibits opportunities for new investment and improvements that will add value to local communities with or without new development.

In accordance with community feedback, this plan identified opportunities to enhance open spaces, calm traffic, and create safer streets to name a few. These community-based improvements will require the active involvement of non-profits, the City, and political representatives but also, most critically, active and engaged community organizations. While many recommendations will need outside financing, other strategies are low-cost solutions that can be implemented in part by volunteer efforts and through existing organizations.

What do we do tomorrow?

Initiate a Discussion Among Taxing Bodies

The first action item is to convene a discussion among taxing bodies (City, County, and School District) and other entities such as the URA and Port Authority about implementation roles. The purpose of the discussion would be to assess each entity's interest in and capacity to implement any of the recommendations. Given limited staff and already full schedules within each entity, implementation will likely require additional staff to help market properties for development and assist with contracting and agreements, engineering, design, and construction. If a TRID is enacted, much of this work will be handled by the Management Entity formed to administer the TRID district and manage implementation.

Submit the Plan for Adoption & Recognition

Next submit the plan to Mayor Ravenstahl's office, Councilwoman Rudiak, Councilman Kraus, Councilwoman Theresa Kail-Smith, and State Representative Chelsa Wagner. The intent is to get the plan recognized by political leadership and to raise awareness that significant strides have been made toward creating an achievable, community-based TOD approach in Pittsburgh.

Work to Designate the TRID

The immediate next step is to work with the State Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and State and local political leaders to establish the TRID. Making TRID a tool to finance the improvements identified in this plan will provide a significant spark to encourage greater attention to TOD and improve the communities around the Junction. To help guide the TRID process and budgeting, Real Estate Strategies has created a draft TRID agreement that can be used as the first step toward establishing a TRID district. This agreement is included in the Appendix of this plan.

Coordinate with Funding Partners

The range of recommendations for the station's revitalization will require coordination and financing well beyond what each community can organize locally. City and State agencies, local institutions, and interested developers must form an active dialog about these recommendations. As with any implementation strategy, the City and its partners should seek to blend dollars from both public and private sources to maximize impact. The plan should be hand-delivered to local foundations, as foundation grants will be needed to maximize the potential of this plan.

Build Organizational Capacity

There are many organizations in the South Hills Junction area with varying levels of capacity to undertake implementation activities. As the plan moves toward implementation, resident and institutional support will be key to the ultimate success of the plan. Recognizing that the range of recommendations adds to the City and community's to-do list, new staff support will be needed that is focused on the opportunities around the Junction. The Hilltop Alliance, Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development, and Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group should continue to work toward building capacity at the community level with an eye toward the specific actions outlined in this Study including greening, housing development, public art, and economic development. As a part of the TRID Management Entity, funding should be considered for a full time TOD / TRID coordinator that would focus on community organizing and act as a liaison between community organizations, and City agencies.

Phasing and Priority Projects

An Implementation Matrix that details the timeframe and potential partners for each recommendation is included on the pages that follow. The spreadsheet is intended to serve as a guide to help organize and track the progress in implementing the plan's components. It should be used actively, updated, and changed once implementation commences.

The priority projects identified in the Matrix are informed by the results of an exercise conducted with residents at the last presentation where preliminary recommendations were presented. After the presentation, those in attendance were asked to do three things:

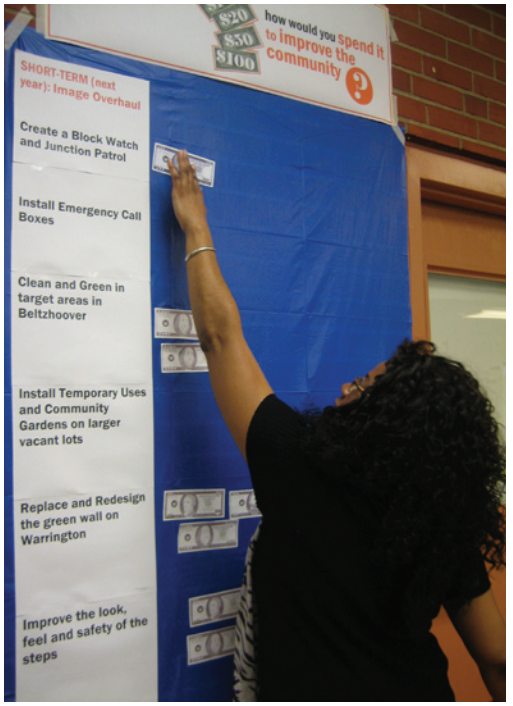
1. Spend play money ($10, $20, $50, and $100) on the recommendations that mattered most to them to help the team get a sense of priorities
2. Make a note of any additional ideas that were missed or forgotten
3. Sign up to be involved and help with implementation

After spending the play money, the dollars were tallied to reveal some community priorities which are represented in Figure 53. The top three priorities identified specifically targeted the look and function of South Hills Junction. The remaining top priorities were evenly split between Short-Term, Infrastructure and Public Realm, and Development recommendations.

The overwhelming top priority was to deck over the Junction to create potentially developable space and better access to the station itself which reflects the general intent of the priorities – improve access and bring new uses to the Junction. Other recommendations, just outside the top ten, identified as priorities by residents include replacing and redesigning the green wall on Warrington ($60); exploring the possibility of creating new ramps to the Junction from Mt. Washington ($50); building new infill housing along Haberman ($50); designing new elevators for key entrances to the Junction ($50); installing real-time information for buses and trains ($50); and installing emergency call boxes at the Junction ($50). All other recommendations received less than $50.

Some of the recommendations identified by residents will take time to accomplish. Taking into account the timeframe and cost of implementation, the attached Matrix identifies short-term, medium-term, and long-term projects as well as key priority projects as identified by residents and stakeholders.

The ball is rolling, the challenge now is to maintain the energy and momentum about the future of TOD in Pittsburgh. *Good luck... and have fun!*


$20
$50
$100
how would you Spend it to improve the community
SHORT-TERM (next year): Image Overhaul
Create a Block Watch and Junction Patrol
Install Emergency Call Boxes
Clean and Green in target areas in Beltzhoover
Install Temporary Uses and Community Gardens on larger vacant lots
Replace and Redesign the green wall on Warrington
Improve the look, feel and safety of the steps

Participants at the last public meeting spend play money to prioritize the recommendations.

show us the money.

If you had $10 $20 $50 $100 how would you spend it to improve the community?

SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION

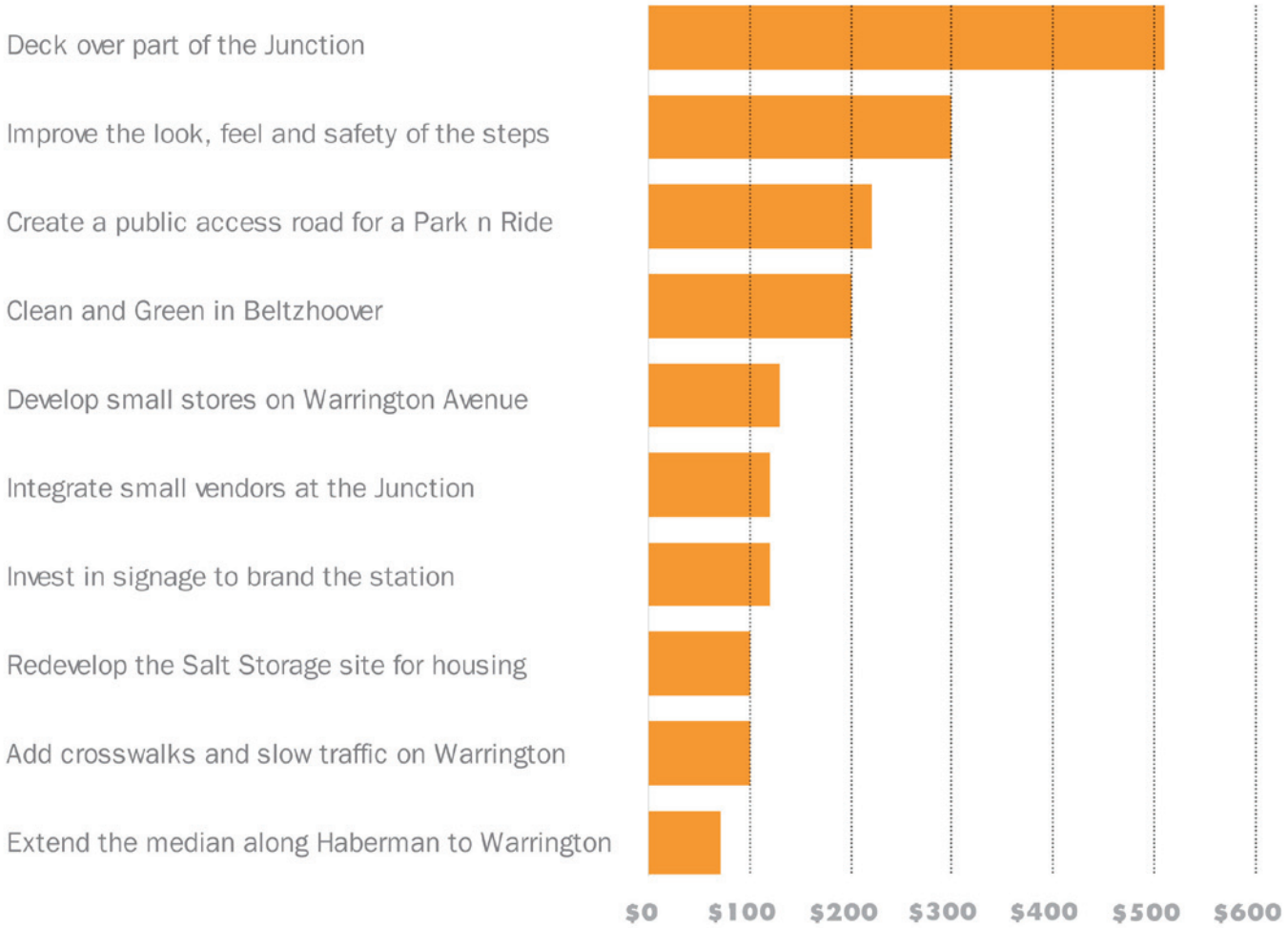

Deck over part of the Junction
Improve the look, feel and safety of the steps
Create a public access road for a Park n Ride
Clean and Green in Beltzhoover
Develop small stores on Warrington Avenue
Integrate small vendors at the Junction
Invest in signage to brand the station
Redevelop the Salt Storage site for housing
Add crosswalks and slow traffic on Warrington
Extend the median along Haberman to Warrington
$0
$100
$200
$300
$400
$500
$600

Figure 53. Community Priorities for Implementation

SMART TRID PLANNING STUDY: SOUTH HILLS JUNCTION IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

All costs are order-of-magnitude only. Costs will need to be updated as implementation progresses

Priority Projects Indicated by: ▶

short-term=2 years
medium-term=3-5 years
long-term=5+ years

1. SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Priority?	Number	Action	Timeframe	Potential Supporting Funding Sources	Estimated Cost
	1.1	Create a Block Watch and Junction Patrol	short-term	CDCs	$10,000
	1.2	Install emergency call boxes	medium-term	Port Authority	$50,000
▶	1.3	Invest in legible signage to help brand the station and improve wayfinding at existing entrances	short-term	Port Authority	$250,000
	1.4	Consider other surfaces for murals or public art to help people navigate their way to the station	short-term	Foundations/corporate partners (Neighborhood Assistance Program/Neighborhood Partnership Program)	$250,000
	1.5	Develop a simple, distinctive planting strategy for green spaces within and approaching the station area	short-term	Foundations/corporate partners (Neighborhood Assistance Program/Neighborhood Partnership Program)	$250,000
	1.6	Replace the existing green wall along Warrington with a new “Green” wall and planted bed along the sidewalk	short-term	Foundations/corporate partners (Neighborhood Assistance Program/Neighborhood Partnership Program)	$150,000

2. PUBLIC REALM & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Priority?	Number	Action	Timeframe	Potential Supporting Funding Sources	Estimated Cost
		Station Area Basics			
▶	2.1	Introduce lighting in the neighborhood, along steps, throughout the station area, and along Warrington Avenue	medium-term	CDBG/Section 108/ corporate partners (NAP/NPP)	$1,000,000
▶	2.2	Clean and green in targeted land stabilization in Beltzhoover	short-term	CDBG/Foundations	$75,000
		Foster a Safer Pedestrian Environment			
▶	2.3	Add crosswalks and slow traffic on Warrington Avenue	medium-term	CDBG/Section 108	$75,000
	2.4	Improve sidewalks from Warrington in Allentown to Saw Mill Run Blvd	medium-term	CDBG/Section 108	$500,000
▶	2.5	Rebuild the entrance steps to the Junction	short-term	Port Authority	$50,000
	2.6	Design new elevators at key entrances to the Junction	long-term	FTA New Freedom	$450,000
	2.7	Create ramps from Mt. Washington to the Junction	long-term	Foundations, Port Authority	
▶	2.8	Extend the median along Haberman to Warrington Avenue	medium-term	City, State, CMAQ / TE funds	$200,000
	2.9	Implement a greening program for Haberman through Beltzhoover	medium-term	Foundations/corporate partners (NAP/NPP)	$150,000
	2.10	Integrate trailheads for Emerald View Park Trail at the Junction	long-term	DCNR	$20,000

		Introduce Transit Amenities			
▶	2.11	Create a public access road through the Junction for a Kiss n Ride	medium-term	Port Authority, TIGER grant	$300,000
	2.12	Investigate opportunities for a Park n Ride lot at South Hills Junction	short-term	Port Authority	$15,000
	2.13	Install real-time information for buses and trains at the Junction	medium-term	Port Authority, Foundation	$25,000

3. DEVELOPMENT

Priority?	Number	Action	Timeframe	Potential Supporting Funding Sources	Estimated Cost
▶	3.1	Integrate small vendors (coffee, newspaper kiosk) at the Junction	medium-term	CDFI small business loans	$50,000
▶	3.2	Seek to integrate development at South Hills Junction			
		Scenario 1	long-term	CDFI funding/New Market Tax Credits/Pennsylvania New American Development Fund (Regional Center)	$700,000 (site prep) + $2,500,000 (community center) + $9,000,000 (housing)
		Scenario 2	long-term	CDFI funding/New Market Tax Credits/Pennsylvania New American Development Fund (Regional Center)	$10,700,000 (site prep) + $12,750,000 (retail) + $8,000,000 (housing)
		Scenario 3	long-term	CDFI funding/New Market Tax Credits/Pennsylvania New American Development Fund (Regional Center)	$20,500,000 (site prep) + $19,000,000 (retail) + $9,000,000 (housing
	3.3	Rename, rebrand, and add visual cues at the Station to reflect the new development at the Junction	short-term	Port Authority	$50,000
	3.4	In the long-term, build upon improvements and new development at the Junction with new residential investment in Beltzhoover	long-term	CDBG/PHFA	$6,000,000

Acronym Glossary

CDBG Community Development Block Grant
CDC Community Development Corporation
CDFI Community Development Financial Institutions Fund
CMAQ Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program
DCNR Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
FTA Federal Transit Administration
NAP Neighborhood Assistance Program
NPP Neighborhood Partnership Program
PHFA Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
TE Transportation Enhancement Funds
TIGER Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Grant